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**STACK FOUR**










“SIT TIGHTER, JACK.”

# COMRADES.

Dec. 20

BY

FANNIE E. NEWBERRY.

AUTHOR OF "TRANSPLANTED," "BRIAN'S HOME," ETC.

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"Oh, be swift to love! Make haste to be kind!"

AMIEL'S JOURNAL.

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AT

NEW YORK

C. J. PETERS & SON,  
TYPE-SETTERS AND ELECTROTYPERS,  
145 HIGH STREET, BOSTON.

TO

**My Own Boys,**

AND ALL OTHER BOYS WHO ARE DEAR TO ME  
FOR THEIR SAKES,

**This Little Book**

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



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# COMRADES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A NEW YEAR'S FIND.

“MASTER BERT! Master Bert!”

“Well?” came sleepily from the other side of the closed door.

“Your uncle wants to know, will you eat breakfast with him this morning? It's New Year's Day, you know.”

“Why, yes, of course.” The tone was more wide awake now. “I'll get right up. Happy New Year to you, James!”

“The same to you, Master Bert, and a many of them! I've your hot water here; shall I come in?”

“To be sure.”

The door was flung wide, disclosing a partially dressed boy, with a fine, manly countenance, now divided between sleepiness and smiles.

“Is n’t it awfully early, James?” he asked, as the elderly serving man stepped inside with his steaming pitcher and fresh towels.

“’Most seven, sir, but it ’s a dark morning, you see,” giving the window-shades an upward boost. “Shall I help you, Master Bert?”

“No, thanks. I ’m glad you called me. It is n’t often I get down to eat with uncle, but I ought to on New Year’s Day. Go now, James, he ’ll be wanting you.”

James obeyed, descending the broad staircase and making his way to the library.

Before its open fire was a fine-looking gentleman of perhaps thirty-five, whose dark, curling hair was just visible above the high-backed easy-chair in which he sat. He glanced up from his paper.

“Ah, James, is he up?”

“Yes, doctor; he ’ll be down soon.”

“Did he object to being called so early?”

“Oh, no, sir!” smiled the older man. “He said he certainly ought to get down to eat with you on New Year’s morning.”

“Good for Bert! I hope we’ve a nice breakfast, James?”

“Tiptop, sir, and just the things young master likes, sir.”

“That’s right. Ah, he’s coming!”

The pert little black-and-tan, who had been lying quietly on the fur rug between his master and the fire, now sprang to his feet and raced for the door, every nerve and fiber alert and expectant.

A clear whistle sounded outside, then came the quick patter of loose slippers across the hardwood floor of the hall, and Herbert entered, his boyish form becomingly arrayed in a handsome morning jacket of black velvet.

“Hello, Nibs! There, there, don’t eat me. Happy New Year, Uncle Tom! You see I’m on deck to begin it, don’t you?”

“That’s right, Bert,” with a fond look; “thought we ought to begin right if we did n’t keep it up, eh?”

“Now don’t twit, uncle! I must say I never could see the use of getting up to eat in the middle of the night; can’t get any fun out of it.”

“So I’ve discovered,” laughing into the youth’s saucy eyes. “But come, there’s the bell. Good-

ness! Nibs, don't tear around so; you'll scratch the begonias all out of the carpet at that rate."

But Nibs had already scrambled through the door and leaped down the stairs leading to the basement, fully resolved that no delay of his should prevent his breakfasting with the family. He could recall one or two occasions when his too great ardor in barking at the kitten next door had made him inattentive to the bell, and lost him this precious privilege. When he reached the foot of the stairs nearly opposite the area door, however, he stopped in his mad run to give a suspicious sniff or two, then dashed at the door, barking furiously.

"Hush, Nibs!" cried the doctor, while Bert, just nearing the lowest step, sprang lightly forward and, driving the dog back, opened the offending portal.

It was dark outside, for a storm shelter completely shut in the square space beneath the upper porch, but from the gloom came a sound between a grunt and an exclamation, and what had looked like a pile of rags in the corner resolved itself into a boy, who rose to his feet and stammered, "I—I—I guess I slept too long!"

Bert laughed out merrily.

"It's a boy, Uncle Tom, and asleep! Why, you must be cold, aren't you? Come in by the fire, quick."

Dr. Loveridge looked over his nephew's shoulder.

"Yes, come in. Did you sleep there all night? What's that rascally watchman about, I wonder!"

"Well, he did look in oncet, but I scrooched close in the corner, and I guess he thought 'twan't nothin' but the door mat," laughed the ragged boy, as he came forward. "Wait, where's my pillow? I must n't lose that."

He picked up a bootblack's kit from the floor, and followed the two inside. When they reached the lighter dining-room Bert saw a tousled figure, somewhat smaller than his own, crowned by a shock of tangled brown curls, nearly falling into the big bright gray eyes beneath. He saw also a rather snub nose and broad mouth, now smilingly disclosing two rows of sound white teeth, while at either side were dimpled cheeks about as dirty as coal dust, street soil and blacking could make them.

But neither dirt nor cold, nor even being dis-

covered in his unlawful retreat, seemed to have any dampening effect upon the boy's good spirits. He said easily, with a glance at the glowing fireplace,

"That feels mighty good this morning, don't it? Here you rat-and-tan, what you nipping at my heels fur? I ain't no tramp."

"Stop, Nibs!" called Bert with authority. "Come off there and let him alone, can't you? What's your name, please?" giving the newcomer a glance of good-fellowship, which made the latter's smile broader than ever.

"I'm Jack Gurney, at your service," with a funny duck of his head.

"Well, Jack, if you'll go and take a wash we'll invite you to breakfast, won't we, Uncle Tom?"

Dr. Loveridge looked dubious and turned to James, who was standing in waiting behind his master's chair.

"Just take him to the lower bathroom, will you? And look here, find him an old suit of Bert's, if you can; these clothes are not fit for such weather."

Jack looked from one to the other, then down at his despised garments, and a merry smile played with the smutty dimples of his cheeks.

“They don’t look very scrumptious, do they? But see here, mister, you must n’t get me too fine or the kids ’ll maul the life out o’ me. I b’long to the perfesh, ye see, and they won’t stand no dude nonsense, nohow.”

“By the ‘perfesh’ I suppose you mean the boot-black’s profession, Jack?” remarked the doctor, a smile curving his dark mustache.

“Yes, sir. I ’m honest; I ain’t no beggar, and usually I don’t sleep in other folks’ doorways, but I ’ve been sorter down on my luck lately, and my week was up where I lodges, so I thought just for a night or two —”

“I see. It was merely a temporary arrangement. Well, that is all right, Jack! Run along with my man now, and let ’s see how respectable you can be when we get down to the real boy.”

Jack evidently appreciated the words, as well as the kindly twinkle in the gentleman’s eye, for he shot back a laughing glance, all his teeth gleaming whitely through the broad mouth.

“Yes, sir, there ’s a good deal of black outside, but it ain’t got inside much yet, I hope!” Then he followed James from the room.

Dart turned to his uncle with an eager look.

“I like him, don't you? He's just jolly! Do, Uncle Tom, let's have him to breakfast.”

“With us, Bert? I really think he would be more comfortable in the servants' room. Still, we'll see when he comes back. You won't insist on waiting, I hope, for I am in a hurry, and the breakfast is getting cold.”

“Of course not.”

He followed his uncle to the table, and the two were soon busy over the fruit.

They had not finished this course, for Bert purposely dallied with his orange, when James entered, and asked in his respectful way,

“Shall I bring the boy in here, sir?”

“Yes, yes,” cried Bert, “can't he, uncle?”

“Oh, I suppose so; yes, James, bring him in.”

A moment later Jack entered. Both looked at him with astonishment. Cleanliness and well-cut clothing had made a greater change than they had looked for. The tangled hair now lay in glossy rings about the white forehead, untanned above the hat-rim, the ruddy cheeks below fairly shone with their scrubbing, while the whole countenance, thus transformed, wore an expression of honesty and good nature pleasant to behold. In



fact, Jack might almost have been taken for a little gentleman.

Bert sprang up from his chair, nearly upsetting it as he cried,

“Why, how nice you look! And that suit is n't much too big, either. Is n't he nice, Uncle Tom?”

That gentleman laughed appreciatively.

“Come and sit down, Jack. Just bring another plate, James, will you? I hope you like buck-wheats, my boy.”

“I like 'most anythin', sir, 'cept cigar stubs. The kids guy me 'cause I won't pick 'em up and smoke 'em, but it sorter goes agin the grain. I might like a real bang-up, fust-class cigar — can't tell — but them muddy, half-chewed stubs is too much for my stummick. Yes, I'll take 'lasses if — you — please.”

The last words were evidently an effort, but seemed to give the speaker almost as much satisfaction as his first mouthful of the fresh cakes, just brought in by James.

He looked around with an air of enjoyment so intense as to be almost ludicrous.

“Well,” he said, looking at Bert, “if this is the kind of luck this new year's a-going to bring

me, there ain't much use in my worriting, be they?"

"Have you worried?" asked Bert sympathetically, laying down his fork to give his undivided attention. "I suppose because you had n't any place to sleep, was n't it?"

"Partly. Then I got into a scrap with Mike Eagan, and he 's lying low to lick me. I don't mind if he 'd be square about it; but he won't! He 's the biggest kid amongst us, but he allers fights Injun, spite of it."

"What 's that?" asked Bert, forgetting to eat, in his interest.

"Fighting Injun? Why, hedging, you know; not coming right out bold into the middle of the ring. First I know he 'll pounce on me some night when I 'm all alone, and 'fore I can holler he 'll knock the stuffin' out o' me; and fact is," stopping to swallow an outrageous mouthful, "I have n't time just now to be laid up in hospital."

Dr. Loveridge had risen, and was putting on his overcoat just outside the door of the dining-room, but perhaps the funny little sound that came from there was not his chuckle, after all. He certainly was quite grave as he glanced in to say,

"I leave you to look after our guest, Bert."

To this Jack promptly responded, "Much obliged for your kindness, sir. I'll have to be going on soon, but can't I give you a shine first, sir? 'T won't cost you a cent."

"Not this morning, thank you, Jack; but see here," fumbling in his pocket, then drawing out a business card, "can you read?"

"Yes *sir!*"

"All right. Here is my office address. Come around that way sometimes and I can get you several shines in the building, I think."

"I will, sir," looking the card over with a businesslike air. "If I could git a reg'lar run on Washington Street my fortune 'ud be made! I'll be sure to come, sir, and Mike can't say then that I've been poaching on his ground."

"Is that what ails Mike?" asked Bert, as his uncle disappeared.

"Yes, he's allers saying that. Soon 's a feller gits a good start anywheres he comes 'round and claims it 's his beat, and if you don't give right up he fights Injun. I don't think much of Mikey anyhow! But what 's the use o' worritin' over him now? Guess you'll think I'm pretty near

starved," he added, in a spasm of bashfulness, as he took his third plateful of cakes from the respectful James.

"I don't like Mike either," observed Bert, ignoring the latter half of the sentence, "I don't like any boy who won't play fair."

Jack beamed upon him as well as he could for eating, and James gazed down upon both with a benevolent smile lighting his honest eyes (nothing could have tempted him to let it overspread his face while on duty); for he had a way of agreeing with "young master" in everything, which fact that little rascal was never slow to take advantage of! Catching the expression now, he said in a wheedling tone,

"James, there 's that revolver of uncle's that he never uses; don't you suppose he 'd just as soon I gave it to Jack? Then you see, if that Mike" —

"Oh, Master Bert!" James was surprised out of even his rigidity. "The revolver in the fine case, all fixed off with silver? Whatever are you thinking of? 'T would lose me my place, sure, if I should meddle with that!"

"But he never uses it, James."

"Oh, see here, now," broke in Jack, "is it a pop

you mean? Gracious me, but I'd never know myself with that in my belt. It's good of you to think of it, but I guess it's all right I can't have it after all, for if I should get mad some time and whip it out, 'fore I thought, 't would be a state's prison job, you see. It's only you rich fellers can carry concealed weapons; they'd have us up too quick for having 'em. No, I'll trust to my two fists yet; they've did me good service" — doubling them up and taking a comprehensive view of them — "and when they gets good and dirty once more, I guess they'll be ready for business! No more cakes, Mr. James, nor meat either; I'm full."

They rose from the table, and Jack looked around for his kit, then down upon his own small person in the fine, warm suit.

"Jiminy!" he exclaimed, with a laugh, "you'll have to let me waller 'round in the coal cellar, or suthin', 'fore I go, or the kids'll give me a gutter bath. I'm too smart by half!"

"Here's a little rip," said Bert with a serious air, touching one elbow, "you might make that bigger; and if you'd slide down the side rail to our front steps it would fix your trousers all right. I spoilt a new pair that way once."

“That ’s a good idee ! ” cried Jack with conviction, “only I won’t take your steps. There ’s a boss place I know for sliding that ’s a good deal dirtier than them ; guess I ’ll try that. Well, I hates to go, but I must.”

“I hate to have you, Jack ; won’t you come again ? I ’ll tell you ; when you have n’t any money to pay for lodgings just come and stay with us ; I can fix you a good place.”

Jack laughed, and his eyes shone like crystals, newly moistened.

“That ’s good of you ! But what would your uncle say ? No, I tell you my luck ’s got to running the right way now, and ’t ain’t a-going to stop. You ’ll see ! Well, good-by.”

They had reached the area door now, and Bert slowly opened it.

“Good-by, Jack. Tell me, what streets are you on most ? ”

“My reg’lar beat is the square ’round the post office, but I don’t allers keep to it. Ever come ’round there ? ”

“Not often, but I will now. You look for a boy on a bay pony Saturday afternoons.”

“All right ! And you look for a kid down on

his knees 'fore some dude a-scrubbin' fur dear life — that 's me!" And laughing till eyes, teeth, and dimples vied in brilliancy, Jack slung his kit over his shoulder and trudged away.

Bert watched him till he reached the corner, where he turned, gave his old cap a farewell swing, and disappeared.

## CHAPTER II.

## AT THE BARMORES'.

SOMEHOW the house seemed dolefully lonely after that. Bert called Nibs, who had made an excursion into the street in the hope of seeing the next door kitten. He mounted slowly to the library, followed rather unwillingly by the disappointed terrier. Here he proceeded to bury his small person in the depths of his uncle's large chair, into which Nibs calmly leaped afterwards, curling himself up comfortably beside his master.

Bert leaned his cheek on one hand, and his thoughtful blue eyes gazed absently into the fire.

"He's a jolly boy!" he thought, "I like him better than Al Williams, or Ralph Penfield. He did n't seem to mind being poor, one bit. Nibs, see here, if you bark at that boy again I'll have to shut you up in the dark room; understand?"

"Yap!" said Nibs, making a playful grab at Bert's warning finger.



“Well, see that you remember, then. That boy may be a bootblack, but he’s honest and square and true, and a dog that is as smart as you must learn to tell the difference between his kind and the bad ones, don’t you see?”

“Yap!” responded Nibs plaintively, beginning to realize that this was a lecture, and wagging his sharp little black nose like a rabbit, in hope of calling a laugh to his master’s serious face.

He succeeded, and became at once perfectly happy, leaping and scratching about till, if the chair had not been upholstered with embossed leather, there would have been little left of it. Bert had to yield his musing fit to the dog’s playfulness, and a romp ensued that effectually drove away all soberness for that time. Finally, bidding the creature down, the boy rose and went to the window.

“Here I am wasting all my holiday,” he said. “Uncle won’t be ready to make any calls with me before afternoon, if he does then, and it’s hardly nine yet—about the time I usually get up. Why don’t I go around to Aunt Chrissie’s?”

No sooner thought than he had turned, and, followed still by the frantic Nibs, who felt sure from

his manner that something was brewing which he might miss, was running up the stairs to his rooms. Here he quickly passed through his "snuggery," as he had named it, a room fitted with every boy-luxury, from shelves filled with juvenile volumes to fishing tackle, a photographic outfit, and several cases, presumably containing musical instruments, on to his luxurious bedroom, with its bath, beyond.

"Dilly," he said to the mulatto chambermaid whom he found busied here, "I 'm going down to my aunt's, but I 'll be back to luncheon. Did you get that spot off my overcoat yesterday?"

"Yes, Master Bert; here 't is all right," producing the rich fur-trimmed garment from a closet. "Guess 't won't smell of de gasoline much now," sniffing at it here and there.

"No, not at all. Thank you, Dilly; and here — that 's for the New Year, you know, and 'cause you 're a good old Dilly as ever lived! Now don't spend it *all* for candy!" and laughing merrily in concert with the pleased woman, he and Nibs rattled down the stairway.

A few moments later a young girl in a thin shawl was crossing the avenue with a huge bundle in her arms. She looked pale and tired, as indeed

she felt, for she had sat up half the night to finish the sewing which the bundle contained, and her head was giddy. In some way her foot tripped, and as she threw out her hands to steady herself the package flew from her grasp and went rolling into the gutter. In an instant a trig little figure in a furred overcoat shot past her, picked up the demoralized roll, and straightening it out as well as he could, handed it back with a charming bow and smile.

It was a little thing, but it made the whole day brighter for both. The young seamstress, with a smile of gratitude still wreathing her lips, passed on with a firmer, more hopeful tread, while Bert, happy at her pleasure, sprang airily along, whistling merrily.

His cousin saw him coming from the oriel window in which she was sitting, and dropped her book, as she cried in a pleased tone,

“Mamma, there’s Bert! Ah, Letty’s opened the door to him. Hello, Nibs! Happy New Year, Bert! There, I’ve caught you for once; Christmas you got it on all of us, don’t you know?”

“Of course I did! The same to you, and

auntie, too," as a lady entered from an inner room. "Yes, you're ahead this time. Do stop that noise, Nibs! You'll have to pet him a little, Flossie; he'll never let up till you do."

"Of course I will, bless its little heart! There, run to mamma, and don't waggle your tail off; I wonder there's a spear left of it! Did you get any presents, Bert?"

"Oh, uncle gave me a V; said he positively could not think of a thing to buy me. What did you get, Flossie?"

The little girl tossed back the curls her pet name so perfectly described with something of impatience.

"Nothing but a book that is n't interesting, a box of Huyler's best, a new music case, and a picture for my room."

"Well, was n't that enough?"

"I wanted a new doll," with a pouting side glance at her mother.

"Really, Flossie, I'd be ashamed to own it!" observed that lady, looking up from her embroidery. "The idea of a great girl nearly thirteen wanting a doll, like a baby! Besides, you have half a dozen now."

“All battered and broken, mamma; and besides, all the fun is in dressing a new one.”

“Well, dear me, Flossie, if I'd known your heart was so set upon it” — the lady's fair face was clouded over with regret — “but it does seem so absurd! However, I suppose I could get it yet.”

“If it's just for the fun of making its clothes that you want a doll,” said Bert, thoughtfully, “why don't you dress some real baby that has a mother too poor or too busy to sew for it herself?”

“Why, what a splendid idea!” Flossie's great brown eyes fairly glowed with excited pleasure. “Did you hear that, mamma? But where could I find one?”

“Well, I suppose there are plenty, if we were only acquainted with them,” said Bert, still thoughtfully. “Perhaps Dilly would know.”

“Yes, or Letty, or Bridget; but if Dilly should know of some cunning little black baby, *would n't* that be fun? I do think they are the sweetest things!” and she clasped her small white hands in ecstasy.

Mrs. Barnore's laughter rang out merrily.

“You absurd children!”

“But mamma, may n’t I do it, if I can find the baby?” urged her little daughter anxiously.

“Why, I don’t know that I have any serious objection, only I expect the work will come mostly on my shoulders — to say nothing of the expense.”

“No, mamma, indeed I ’ll do the work, and I ’ve some pocket money left” —

“So have I,” put in Bert, “but perhaps — the fact is, Flossie, I ’ve got a new friend.”

Flossie, quick as a bird in all her motions, flashed around upon him.

“You have? Is it a boy? Is he nice?”

“It ’s a boy, and he ’s splendid, I think, but perhaps you won’t. He is a business boy, you see, and has n’t much style to him; in fact, he is a bootblack.”

“A — what did you say?” almost screamed Mrs. Barmore, while Flossie danced up and down with delight at the fun of it all, ejaculating “A bootblack! A bootblack!” at every jump.

Mrs. Barmore collected herself.

“Flossie, sit down; you are positively rude! Really, Bert, I hope Brother Tom knows about this.”

“Oh yes, Aunt Chrissie. Jack — his name ’s

Jack — took breakfast with us this morning. I'm sure uncle likes him."

"But a bootblack! Where did you pick him up?"

"In the area storm-door. We found him there when we went downstairs."

The lady looked as if she would faint.

"Herbert Deane Loveridge! Do you mean it? A *tramp!*"

"No, auntie, not at all, just a bootblack. He was down on his luck a little, and slept there this once, but he won't again, for I shall see that he is comfortably lodged. You see, he's my friend now."

Mrs. Barmore laid down her work and looked at the boy. He, meanwhile, evidently quite unconscious of her gaze, calmly toyed with the terrier's silky ears, his fine face wreathed in a serious little smile as he thought of this new relation and its responsibilities.

Mrs. Barmore took up her work again, and the words she had intended to say died on her lips. Instead, there was a mist over her fine eyes which made it difficult to see the traced lines of her embroidery pattern.

"The Lord will protect his own," she thought.

“Bert could not fall in love with what was all evil — but I ’ll speak to Tom.”

So the talk drifted to other things, the children comparing lessons and talking over the latest stories they had read. Though Bert was six months the elder they were upon nearly the same grade in their studies, Florence attending a private school for girls near by, while Bert recited daily to a tutor.

After a while he slipped two fingers into the pocket of his cutaway, and fished out a wee package wrapped in tissue paper.

“It ’s my New Year’s greeting,” he said, handing it to his cousin, “and I do hope it will fit!”

“Oh, how lovely!” cried Flossie, as she opened the box, to find inside a tiny gold thimble, which she instantly proceeded to fit upon her slender finger. “See mamma, is n’t it a beauty? And exactly what I needed! Now, what do you say to my sewing for that baby?”

“First catch your baby!” laughed her mother, taking the pretty gift from her hands to examine it more at leisure. “Decidedly a dear little hat. Do you know what the Germans call a thimble? Fingerhut, or hat. Is n’t that a clever notion?”



“Very,” said Bert. Then turning mischievously to his cousin, “So you won’t cry because it is n’t a doll?”

“Now don’t tease!” laughed Flossie, “the baby will be *much* nicer, especially if it’s a darky baby. And this is such a beauty! I shall always keep it and wear it, Bert —”

“Till your finger outgrows it,” interrupted her mother. “I must thank you too, Bert. It’s a beautiful gift! I’m afraid our little remembrance will look small beside it, eh, Flossie?”

Obedying her gesture the child went to a cabinet in one corner, and drew from its central cupboard a neatly framed sketch, representing a beautiful bay pony, saddled and bridled, and beside it a pert little terrier holding the reins, whose alert air seemed to say “Touch either of us, if you dare!”

“Bay Boy and Nibs! And natural as life. How did you get so perfect a picture?” cried Bert in a rapture.

“Oh, James helped me,” laughed Flossie, her dark eyes glowing at his pleasure. “He went with me to the stable one day, and fixed them for me to take with my kodak; then mamma helped me with the enlarged sketch. It is good, is n’t it?”

“Splendid! My! I’d rather have it than a dozen thimbles.”

“How singular, when a thimble is so useful to a boy!” remarked Mrs. Barmore, with fine sarcasm.

Bert laughed good-naturedly.

“Well, than a dozen anything else, then. See, Nibs, do you recognize yourself, sitting up there so fine and handsome? Now, go kiss Flossie for her pretty picture.”

The dog evidently comprehended the order, for he wriggled across to Flossie, gave a quick lick at her offered hand with his little red tongue, then wriggled back again, ready to start with his master, who now made his adieux and departed.

Bert was much pleased to find his uncle at home waiting to eat luncheon with him, for this seldom happened, even on a holiday. The doctor greeted him with a —

“Well, my boy, where is Jack?”

“Oh, he had to be off to his work, but I’m going to see him again soon. I like him so much, Uncle Tom, and I want him for my friend.”

Dr. Loveridge looked at the little fellow in a contemplative manner from the depths of his arm-

chair (the same one which Nibs had not quite succeeded in destroying that morning), and a whimsical look crossed his face.

“Does he reciprocate, Bert?”

“I think so, uncle,” dropping his overcoat on the broad lounge and throwing himself at length upon the fur rug at that gentleman’s feet. “Of course I did n’t say so in so many words, nor he either; but he ’s to watch for me when I ’m out riding, and I ’m to go to the post-office square, where I ’ll be pretty apt to see him at work.”

“Polishing boots?”

“Yes, uncle.”

The doctor gently struck the tips of his fingers together and gazed fondly down at the easy figure before him.

“He may want you to get down and let him ride the pony, Bert.”

If there was a deeper meaning in these words than came to the surface Bert did not notice. He simply rolled over on his back, and clasping his hands under his blonde head, said promptly,

“Yes, I thought of that, and of course I shall be glad to do it. Just as likely as not Jack never had a pony-ride in his life.”

“That is very probable, Bert.”

“And I could keep his kit while he was gone, and if anybody came to be blacked I could ask them to wait just a minute; so he would n't lose any customers, you see.”

“True! So you could. But what if Mike came along and accused you of poaching?”

The doctor's eyes were hardly so grave as the rest of his face.

“Well, I had n't thought of that, but I think I could manage, even without a revolver. The fact is, Uncle Tom, I came very near giving Jack yours to-day, but — ”

“You did? Whew! pretty cool that!”

“Yes, but Jack said no; he might get mad and pull it out when he ought n't to; then they'd arrest him for carrying concealed weapons; so I did n't.”

“Indeed! I'm glad Jack is so honest.”

“Oh yes, he's honest. You can see that. And I do hope Mike won't get the best of him. I don't believe he will, either.”

“Why won't he, Bert?”

“Because, uncle, I suspect Jack's a fighter; his fists look like it. He said they'd done him

good service, and would again, and his eyes looked the way yours do when you 're riding Spitfire and he acts ugly."

"Oh, they did, eh?"

"Yes. I 'm pretty sure he 'd fight before he would run."

"Well, I should n't wonder if you are right, Bert, but —"

"Well, uncle, I 'm listening."

The doctor withdrew his absent gaze from the top of the bookcase opposite, and let it rest once more on his nephew.

"Don't go too fast, my boy! Remember that Jack has lived in the streets, and must have learned some things not good for him or you. I would n't trust —" he stopped abruptly, then rose and walked across the room and back, stopping again close by the lad. "I think I 'll change my sentence a little," he said gently. "Trust him, but if he shows any wrong traits, or says wicked things, just come away. Will you, Herbert?"

"I will, uncle," answered the boy earnestly, rising to his elbow in surprise at the unusual address.

Perhaps it impressed the words upon his memory as nothing else would have done. At any rate he remained quite silent till James came in to announce luncheon; then he sprang to his feet, nearly falling over Nibs who was, as usual, in the way, and slipping his hand into the doctor's palm said warmly,

“Uncle, I know Jack is rough, but I don't believe he would do a real mean thing any sooner than I would, and I do hope he 'll be my friend!”

## CHAPTER III.

## JACK HAS A RIDE.

THE next Saturday was a bright, sunny day with the temperature hardly below the freezing point, and Bert gayly mounted Bay Boy, glad that his wadded jacket and stiff little English hat would not have to be exchanged for overcoat and fur cap. He liked always to appear well on horseback, and was very particular about the care and equipments of his pony, but to-day he felt unusually anxious to have everything shipshape.

“I want Bay Boy to be just as nice for Jack as for myself,” he said within his loyal little heart. Taking the whip from careful James, who had himself adjusted the stirrups to the short, gaitered legs, he waved the man a courteous adieu, and rode gayly away, Nibs meanwhile howling piteously from the projecting window of the library.

The one ambition of Nibs' life, so far invariably

thwarted, was to follow Bay Boy on his easy can-  
ters, even though, as Bert often informed him, it  
might be to death and disaster in the arms of some  
wretched dog thief always lying in wait for his  
kind. Again he saw this bright vision fade away  
with every lope of Bay Boy down the avenue,  
and with one last, mournful, yet more resigned  
whine, he withdrew to watch a certain rat-hole he  
knew of behind the bookcase.

It was a long two miles from the Loveridge  
mansion to the post office, but Bert enjoyed every  
step of the way. The warmth and sunshine had  
brought out a multitude of carriages, and he was  
constantly meeting people whom he knew, and  
who greeted him with pleased bows, or an audible  
“Ah, Bert!” as he cantered by, lifting his whip-  
hand lightly to his hat in salutation. But later  
the avenue was changed for business streets, con-  
taining a confusing mass of carts, drays, and  
heavy trucks, among which an occasional car-  
riage struggled along, and Bert had to quiet the  
pony’s canter to an impatient walk. The post  
office, a massive stone building, now loomed be-  
fore him, and his watchful eyes were turned first  
to one side, then the other, as he rode slowly near



the curbing, hoping for a glimpse of the smutty, radiant face he longed to see.

As Bert was thus riding close to the gutter, now running with the melted muddy snow of the streets, some one dashed across his track spattering the slime well up over his polished leggings. A second later, a voice close behind him set up a shrill cry of —

“Shine, sir? Tiptop shine for a nickel!”

Bert looked around expectantly, but instead of Jack's happy face he encountered a sullen, hang-dog countenance with thick lips and slits of eyes and a shock of coarse hair overhanging the low forehead, even to the eyebrows.

He pointed to Bert's muddied leggings, and asked again, “Want 'em shined, mister?”

The young rider shook his head.

“Not now. Do you know a boy named Jack Gurney, who belongs somewhere around here?”

“Yes, drat him! Don't know any good of him either — conceited ape! Wot you want of him?”

“Just to see him. I'm a friend of his,” indignantly, “and I don't believe you know Jack, or you would n't speak so about him; he's a nice boy!”

The other stuck his tongue into his cheek, then burst into derisive laughter.

“Nice boy, hey?” mimicking the other’s refined tones. “And a friend of yours? Haw, haw! that ’s the best thing yet. Latest edition of ‘Comrades,’ jest out. When ’s Jack goin’ to set up his carriage, hey?”

Bert flushed angrily.

“I really believe you ’re that Mike Eagan!” he sputtered out.

“And what if I am *that* Mike Eagan, you dirty little dude, you! If you think that riding on a pony makes you any better ’n me, I ’ll show you. *That* Mike Eagan, indeed!”

“Hello, is that you?” sang out a merry voice, and Bert turned in glad relief.

“Yes, it ’s I, Jack, and here is Mike too. We came near quarreling, I ’m afraid.”

“Humph! Come near punching your eyes out!” muttered that interesting youth, drawing back a little as Jack approached.

“Well, you see I keeps mostly on the other side of the square,” said Jack quickly, “though this is a part of my beat, too,” looking defiantly at Mike, who scowled back with savage emphasis.

Then catching sight of Bert's soiled leggings he added with an air of fine scorn,

"Oh, been at your old tricks, I see."

"Shet yer head!" growled Mike, beginning to edge away, for the whip in Bert's hand was flipping nervously, and he knew well that Jack alone was almost enough for him, great loafer that he was, let alone this new arrival. So hurling defiance, which grew louder as the distance widened between them, he finally disappeared.

"What a dreadful boy!" exclaimed Bert with a long breath, adding with a laugh, "But he is n't any too brave! I can imagine he 'd fight 'Injun' every time."

"Well, he is n't right pleasant," laughed Jack; "but never mind him now. I'm awful glad to see you again, Mr. — Mr. —"

"Oh, call me Bert," said the latter quickly, "you know we are friends now."

"You and me? It 's kinder queer, but I like it. What a beautiful pony!"

"Is n't he nice? I'm sorry he got muddy, but you won't mind, will you?"

"I mind? I guess not!" laughing heartily. "Only I was mad at Mike for splashing you. If

I could n't get shins without such mean tricks I'd go out o' the business."

"Yes," said Bert, "so would I. Would n't you like a ride, Jack?"

"I? On that pony?"

"Yes, on Bay Boy; he's as gentle as a lamb. I'll hold your kit."

Bert threw himself lightly to the sidewalk and took the grimy little box, while Jack, all aglow with surprise, delight and expectation, and with some deeper, tenderer feeling which he could not have named to himself, looked at him a minute to see if he were in earnest, then putting a foot clumsily into the stirrup, managed, with a boost from Bert, to vault into the saddle.

"That's right," said the latter; "now get your feet firmly fixed, then hold your knees close to his sides and sit up straight, with the reins tight in your left hand. See?"

"Yes," breathed Jack, wondering what would happen next, for he was giddy with all this happiness, as much as with his elevated position.

"Now let him go. Get up, Bay Boy — g'long!" and the pony started off on a gentle canter which, however, nearly unseated the strange rider.

Bert ran alongside, shouting encouragement.

“Sit tighter, Jack; press him with your knees — that ’s it — splendid! Hold your back stiff, but let your muscles give when the horse lifts you; that ’s better — fine!” So around the square they went, Jack momentarily gaining confidence, while Bert, unmindful of mud or crowds, pressed along close to the edge of the walk, glowing with pride and exercise, the kit swinging, half forgotten, from his hands.

“Well, I never!” said one policeman to another, as their beats brought them together on the corner. “Is n’t that an odd sight, now? The bootblack ’s riding the little swell’s pony, while he ’s carrying the kit. I tell you that ’s better than a sermon, Joe!”

“It ’s right you are, Sam! And it ’s Gentleman Jack that ’s getting the ride too; I ’m glad of that. He ’s about the decentest kid on the street I think; straight and honest as daylight. Wonder how he got in with the little ’ristercrat? Helped him out of some scrape, I ’ll be bound. Hello, the fire patrol!” and each sped to his place of duty.

An instant later there was a clash and clangor, a hurried parting to right and left of the vehicles

in the street, shouts, outcries, and clamor indescribable. Then the fire engine steamed by in its mad rush eastward, followed by the truck and ladder carts, after which trailed a line of hooting, yelling boys. The patrol wagon dashed around the corner just as Bert was dancing up and down, clapping and shouting so loudly with delight at Jack's performance that he was oblivious to all else.

Now, however, he saw the danger to his friend, who, just as oblivious, was cantering nimbly along right in their path, and turning pale with fright, he sped after.

"Jack! Jack! Turn him around and face the music. *Face the music!* Turn him *towards* the engine, or he'll bolt!" shrieked Bert, waving the kit madly in air; and in spite of the clanging bells, and all the other confused noises, Jack heard the clear, shrill cry, and almost unconsciously obeyed it. He turned the now prancing, frightened pony just in time to avoid the patrol wagon, clinging for dear life to mane and bridle as the creature leaped and snorted under him. Before Bay Boy could quite bolt, some one cleared the gutter at a bound, dashed among the racing engines, avoiding them as by a miracle, and just as Jack thought he must

be thrown, Bert's hand grasped the bridle, and Bert's voice rang out —

“Be still, Bay Boy; be quiet, I say! Foolish thing, you know an engine, don't you?” The pony, recognizing his master, and half ashamed now the excitement was over, subsided into his usual decorous demeanor, while a much relieved bootblack slid swiftly to the ground.

“Are you hurt, Bert? Did n't they hit you?” he asked breathlessly, as he felt the solid soil under his feet once more. “My! but I thought you 'd be killed!”

Bert smiled. “I 'm all right, Jack, but you had a close shave. If Bay Boy had thrown you there by the engine there would n't have been much left to pick up, I 'm afraid! Guess we 'll try our next ride in a quieter spot, won't we?” He leaped to the saddle, and gathered up the reins.

“I should say! But I would n't be so scared again, I don't believe. I was gitting the hang of it fust-rate when that racket begun. Wonder where the fire is, anyhow? Hello, Tut, where 's the blaze?” hailing one of the “perfesh” who just then rounded the corner.

“In a brewery down below. It 's out now;

did n't burn much. They turned the beer onto it, I guess." The boy grinned as he went by, with his eyes fixed on Bert.

"Could n't put it to a better use," muttered Jack.

His friend gave him a pleased glance.

"Don't you like beer, Jack?"

"No, not a bit better 'n cigar stubs. I've got no cause to be fond of either!" His tone was threaded with a bitterness which Bert had not heard in it before.

They began moving slowly along now, and the latter asked in a confidential tone,

"How 's your luck, Jack?"

"Oh, fust-rate!" with a blithe laugh. "Business has been real brisk sence the thaw, and I've j'ined a Lodging Club, so 't I gits my supper and bed cheap."

"That 's good! Have you seen my uncle lately?"

"Yes, lots o' times; give him a shine this very morning, and a lot of other fellers — that is gentlemen — too, that your uncle spoke to in the building. I 'm to go there every day."

"I 'm so glad! You 'll get rich, Jack. And I



see you 've got these clothes so that you would n't know them from the old ones."

Jack turned, and gave him a knowing wink.

"That 's where you 're off, Bert! These are some old ones. I traded the tennis shirt and the extry togs — collar and tie, ye know, — fur this whole suit, but I've saved up the rest of 'em for a dress suit — ahem! Ye see, down to the lodge each of us hes a wardrobe with a lock and key to it, so 't I 've got 'em all safe. I tell you I 'm gitting to be almost as big a swell as you be!" and Jack's eyes shone with laughter and affection.

"Oh, I 'm not a swell, Jack; only, you see, Uncle Tom has n't anybody else to spend his money on. Did you know my father was his twin brother?"

"No; is that so?"

"Yes; and they were always together, till they grew up. They thought they could n't live without each other. Their father, my grandpa, you know, was a funny fellow and he always called them Tom and Jerry, though their real names were Horace and Herbert. But I should n't feel natural to say Uncle Horace. Everybody calls him Tom, and always did. Of course my father was Jerry."

“I see. Hes n’t your uncle got any children?”

“No, he never had — or a wife either.” Bert threw his right leg over the saddle, girl-fashion, and lowered his voice to a confidential murmur, for they had now left the more crowded streets behind them, and had entered a park whose quiet bridle path admitted of loitering and conversation. “You see it was like this: when they went to college my father fell in love with a pretty girl who lived in the town, and he was married to her before they graduated. Grandpa did n’t like it a bit, but Uncle Tom stood right by them through it all. He says she was as good as she was beautiful, and that’s saying a good deal, if her pictures are like her. Well, I was a wee bit of a baby when she died, and then Uncle Tom came and lived at our house and took care of me like a mother, himself, for my father was so broken up with his trouble that he did n’t do anything but mourn, and read big books, and go mooning around like a crazy man. I can just remember him, and I can’t think of a time that I ever saw him laugh. Poor fellow! I don’t suppose he was ever well any of the time, and he died of some kind of a fever when I was in kilts. Then Uncle Tom brought me here.

When grandpa died he left him lots of money. Of course Aunt Chrissie had half, but then it was a good deal. And besides he makes a sight doctoring people, for he works just as hard as if he was poor. So, you see, we 've always been together, and I don't believe uncle has ever thought of marrying. He tells me, sometimes, that I 'm his lost youth come back, and I believe in his heart he hates to deny me anything — but of course he does, occasionally."

"It 's a pretty snug berth, Bert," said his companion appreciatively.

"Well, yes, I could n't ask to be much better off. But tell me about yourself, Jack ; are you an orphan too?"

"I ain't 'xactly sure, but I s'pose I am. Leastways, I don't know of any parients I could lay claim to — wish 't I did! The fust thing I remember about myself I was living with a man that used to send me out begging every day, and lick me when I did n't bring home pennies enough. He was drunk most o' the time, and the only let-up I hed was when he was sleepin' off his sprees. Well, I was beggin' on a street-crossin' one day when 't was awful muddy, and an ole party what

hed jest crossed through the puddin' turned on me and said, 'See here, little chap, if you want pennies why on earth don't you get a blacking brush and go to work? You could get plenty to do such days as this.' I fired right up at the idee, for though I was a little bit of a kid I hated to be begging all day long, so I spoke out quick, 'If I hed the money I 'd buy one this minute!'

"At that the ole party give me a sharp look, then he laughed and said, 'Well, here, you mite, take this and invest it, then. I'll wait in the doorway till you come back with the change, and you may give me your first shine.'

"I took the dollar and brought back a brush and blacking, and the way I worked over that man's boots would 'a' made a hen laugh! But I made 'em shine, before I left 'em, and he said, 'Well, I believe you 'll make a go of it; and see here, if you 're ever a rich man, remember you got your first start from Peter Gurney.'

"Before that I had n't owned any name 'cept Jack, but after this I tacked the Gurney on, jest fur good luck, you know. So I set up fur myself and kep' hid away from the man I 'd lived with till I growed so big he would n't know me.

I've heard sence that he 'd gone 'way out West, and I 'm glad of it! But I would like to see the good ole party agin, though I never hev, fur he was a boss chap, ef he was queer. And that 's about all the story I've got, I guess, only —”

“ Only what, Jack ? ”

“ Well, I was thinkin'. Sometimes I do hev queer thoughts, or notions like, fur they don't more 'n come when they 're gone. I hed one in your house thet mornin'. Somehow, it seemed like suthin' I 'd knowed about oncet myself; not jest the same, you know, but like; and there 's a pictur' into O'Brian's ” — he lowered his voice almost to a whisper — “ the pictur' of a pretty lady with a wreath of oak leaves on her head, that I call 'mother.' But I would n't tell this foolishness to any one but you, Bert, though I allers feel, whenever I look at it, that I knew the real lady oncet, and she *was* my mother ! ”

Jack's eyes glittered with suppressed tears as he continued.

“ And it 's goin' to see that pictur' that makes — well, makes me kinder spleen agin some o' the things the kids do. You see, Bert, she 's real fine and sweet, and ef my mother should be like that,

don't you see? and somewhars a-lookin' on, why, I would n't want to git too low down now, would I?"

"Of course not, Jack!"

"So that 's the way of it; but the kids don't know, only they call me 'Gentleman Jack,' an' chaff me lots; but I don't care much, would you?"

"No, I don't think I would," was Bert's earnest reply.

"And lots o' times I hev to act rougher 'n I feel, or they 'd give it to me worse 'n they do. But I don't let the bad really git *inside*, Bert, honest, I don't! And, say, I 've been goin' to the night school down to the Mission fur a good while now, and I kin read an' write some, and do sums in addition and subtraction, and they say I 'm gittin' on fust-rate."

"That 's good, Jack! I 've a sight of nice books, and you can take them whenever you like."

"Thank you; ef I kin git the time to read 'em."

"Well, you don't work Sundays, of course" —

He stopped, for Jack was hanging his head, as if in shame.

"Ye see, it 's the bes' day I hev, fur all them hard-workin' fellers what don't ever black up dur-

in' the week takes a shine; do you think it 's a bad thing to do?"

"I wish you did n't have to, Jack; and I was going to ask you to come and spend next Sunday — to-morrow, that is — with me. How much do you usually make a Sunday?"

"Last one I made a dollar; sometimes it 's more, sometimes less."

"Oh, well, I can fix that all right, then! If you'll give it up, I'll save a dollar out of my pocket money, and give it to you every Sunday. Then, besides, you would n't have to buy meals that day; would n't it pay you?"

"I guess it would! But say, I don't like to take your money. It seems like begging, and I ain't never asked odds of anybody sence ole Peter Gurney give me the blacking brush."

"But I 'm your friend, Jack! That makes all the difference in the world, don't you see? It is n't asking odds, either, because your company will be more to me than the dollar."

Jack looked up into the kind eyes that were beaming down upon him, and a lump grew in his throat.

"Bert, you 're awful good!" he said, huskily.

“ I ’ll come, sure. I could n’t hev a better chance to be decent, I ’m thinking. What time will you want me ? ”

“ Come as early as you can. If you get there by nine you ’ll probably catch us at breakfast, and we always have a real good one Sundays ! ”

“ I don’t need urgin’ ,” laughed Jack, and with a warm hand clasp they parted, to meet again on the morrow.



## CHAPTER IV.

### SUNDAY WITH THE LOVERIDGES.

THAT evening Bert recounted the afternoon's adventures to his uncle, who listened with the deepest interest.

When the boy reached the part relating to the pictured lady there was a momentary hesitation before he went on with the story.

"What I'm going to tell you now, uncle, is real confidential, and I don't think you had better ever mention it to Jack, if you please."

"I will not, Bert, certainly."

"Well, there's an Idea Jack has" (he emphasized the word as if it were all in capitals) "which is a bit queer. He thinks a certain picture of a lady, with a wreath on her head, in O'Brian's window, is like what his mother used to be, and he goes to see her every now and then; and that's what makes him try to keep good and decent, for she's a nice, pretty lady who would n't want her

boy to be rough and bad. And so, if Jack has to be something like the other boys so they won't make too much fun of him, he don't really like it, you see, on account of this lady, his mother."

The doctor put his hand suddenly on Bert's shoulder — the child was leaning affectionately against his chair — and his eyes grew very dark and soft.

"Yes," he almost whispered, "go on."

"Well, that's 'most all, uncle, only about his working Sundays. Of course Jack has to eat on that day, too, and it's a good one for his trade, but I did n't like to think of his doing so, and I asked him to come and stay with us for his meals; and I'm to help him make up what he would lose by not working, out of my allowance."

"This will mean less French candy and ice cream, my boy."

"I know, but I'm getting pretty big for those, now. Then I have a dollar and a half a week, besides the extras I'm always getting for presents; so even if I give Jack a dollar I shall not be quite poor."

"Yes, a third of your income will be left. He puts us older sinners to shame!"

“What did you say, uncle?” for the last words were in an undertone.

“Nothing special, my boy. Does Jack come tomorrow, then?”

“Yes, uncle, if you don’t object.”

“On the contrary, I shall be pleased to see him. Will you take him to Sunday-school?”

“I’d like to, yes, sir.”

“Very well. Now, good-night and pleasant dreams; I’m pretty sure you’ll have them even without the wishing.”

“Yes, I nearly always do, Uncle Tom. Good-night — and if Nibs cries with the cold you won’t mind if I let him get on the foot of my bed? I’ll lay the old blanket down first.”

His uncle gave him a funny look.

“You’ll have to settle that with Dilly, Bert; I’m tired of standing between two fires.” For this was a point on which Bert was inclined to be obstinate, and Dilly’s strenuous objections to “de likes ob dat little dog mussin’ all de clean spreads” had reached the master’s ears more than once. A compromise had been attempted, which allowed Nibs a snug berth in the wood basket by Bert’s grate, made luxuriously comfortable with the blanket; but

even this did not satisfy his pampered dogship, and when he cried for the cozy spot over Bert's warm feet it was hard for the latter to refuse him.

The next day Jack appeared bright and early, having evidently made an elaborate toilet for the occasion. At any rate his clothing was quite respectable, while the black streak behind his ears proved conclusively that he had washed his face.

After the two boys had talked awhile before the library fire, playing intermittently with Nibs, the doctor meanwhile apparently absorbed in his paper, the latter laid it down to remark,

“By the way, Bert, have you had your plunge yet?”

“Oh yes, uncle, when I first got up.”

“Why don't you show Jack our swimming bath? Perhaps he 'd like a dive, too.”

“All right. Come on, Jack; it 's fun, I tell you!”

“I 'd like it, I 'm sure,” said Jack. “You see, we 've got a bath room to the Lodge, but there 's so many kids a-waiting Sundays that a feller can't git half a chance. Leastways, I could n't this morning.”

"I 'm sure you look very nice," murmured Bert, politely, as they left the room together.

He led the way to an apartment in the rear of the large house, and, opening a door, ushered his friend into a room whose narrow edge of tiled flooring surrounded a deep square tank as large as a half-dozen ordinary baths, the whole lined with porcelain. Steam pipes kept the room at summer heat, a shower bath filled an alcove at one side, while the water in the tank was kept constantly changing by means of pipes, properly arranged.

"This is where we have our winter swims," laughed the young host, "and it 's heaps of fun!"

Jack's eyes shone.

"My! but that 's fine. D' ye think your uncle meant I might go in?"

"Of course he did. And here 's everything you need," pointing to the various toilet conveniences. "Now stay as long as you like; only uncle won't let me be in more than twenty minutes, ever. He says it is n't good for any one."

"Then I won't," said Jack docilely.

"That 's right! I 'll go and study my lesson, I guess," and Bert went back to the library.

When Jack rejoined the family he fairly shone with pleasure and cleanliness.

“That ’s about the bossiest thing I ever saw!” he remarked with enthusiasm. “We really ought to have one at the Lodge. When I get a rich man,” showing his teeth in a hearty smile at the idea, “I’m a-goin’ to build a lodgin’ house jest fur poor kids, and I’ll hev lots of water in it. There’s plenty of ’em would keep clean if ’t wan’t so much trouble, I reckon; I know I would, anyhow.”

When the two started for Sunday-school Uncle Tom watched them with a tender, whimsical smile curving his lips.

“How like my boy is to his sweet mother,” he murmured softly; “pure, unworldly, and as little conscious of himself as a perfume-breathing violet. Ah, Margaret, you could n’t give me your heart, but God has given me your child, yours and Jerry’s. I wonder if both of you know, and are satisfied with my care of him to-day?” and with a gentle sigh he went back to his book.

It was a golden day for Jack, and for Bert as well, for kindness, like mercy, “blesses him that gives” as well as “him that takes.”

After the bountiful dinner the two went up to

Bert's charming little rooms and looked over the books, pictures, and curiosities with which they were filled, Nibs meanwhile poking his sharp nose into everything with all the curiosity of his species.

So far Jack had never shown a touch of envy, but after a lengthened silence, during which both had been intent on their books, Bert heard him draw a breath so long and deep that it was almost a moan.

"Why, Jack, are you tired?" he asked quickly, as he looked up in consternation.

"No, but—say, Bert, be there many boys so well off as you be?"

"I don't know." Bert's expression became thoughtful. "Of course there are plenty who have nice things—why, there's Ned Ewing has a team of goats and a cart, and Al Williams has a sailboat all his own—but there are n't many who have an Uncle Tom."

"I believe you!" said Jack. "I was jest a-thinkin' it can't be so very hard fur such boys to be good and clean-talkin' and all that. Ye see it sorter fits in with the rest of it," waving his hand comprehensively to include their surroundings.

Bert's cheeks flushed a little.

"I'm not always good," he acknowledged shamefacedly. "The other day I got mad at James because Bay Boy had a straw in his tail, and told him he was a slouchy old tadpole, when really James does n't belong to the stable at all, and only looks after the pony when I ride, so as to be sure everything 's safe. I've even been saucy to uncle! Once, last vacation, I sulked all the afternoon and would n't come down to dinner, because he would n't keep his promise to take me to the dens in Lincoln Park on account of a patient that got worse; and of course it was n't Uncle Tom 's fault at all that he could n't go."

"'Less 't was 'count of poor doctorin'," put in Jack, with a mischievous look.

"Well, it was n't. Uncle Tom 's the best doctor in this city; all his patients say so, and that was a disagreeable, obstinate woman who got worse anyhow. I heard him telling Aunt Chrissie; he said she was 'an obstinate case.'"

"Wimmins is apt to be," observed Jack, judicially.

"Yes, Dilly is, I know; the way she stands out about Nibs sleeping on my bed is really ridic'lous;



but some are better—that is, ladies like Aunt Chrissie.”

“Oh yes, ladies is all right!” agreed Jack, with the picture in his mind. “Sometimes they acts pretty top-headed on the street, but I guess they don’t mean to be insultin’.”

“Oh no!” said Bert; and having thus settled the characteristics of the weaker sex, much like boys of larger growth, they drifted into talk more interesting to themselves than anybody else.

## CHAPTER V.

## TRAMP.

IT was perhaps a fortnight later when, one morning, as the doctor alighted from his coupé at his down-town office, he found the stairway blocked by a very ragged boy holding a miserable little dog in his arms. The second glance assured him it was Jack.

“Ah, good morning!” he said kindly. “Where did you get that creature, my boy?” laughing at the comical forlornness of its matted curling hair, and lean, hungry-jawed expression.

“Well, ye see, sir, I guess it don’t belong no-where, but it was meandering through our alley when some of the kids took after it with stones, and one of ’em broke its leg. I picked the poor little thing up, and licked the fellers off as well as I could with one fist and my feet, and then I thought I’d bring it to you and see if you could n’t fix its leg. I’ll tell you,” he added quickly, “I ’m willin’ to pay fur it.”

The doctor smiled and turned to his coachman.

“Bring the coupé down again about two o’clock, Charles, and don’t forget what I told you about the hot mash for Spitfire. Now come, Jack.”

The strangely-assorted trio mounted the stairs together. When they reached his luxurious office, Dr. Loveridge gravely proceeded to examine his novel patient, calling forth a howl or two from the wounded animal, in spite of his evident care.

“Yes,” he said, finally, “the leg is indeed broken, but not so badly that it will not soon heal again, if properly set and bandaged.”

“And how much is the job worth?” asked Jack, anxiously.

The doctor walked leisurely across to a cupboard in one corner, from which he proceeded to take some splints and a roll of bandages, before he finally answered.

“Well, it’s a service I have never before been called upon to perform for an animal but I should think five dollars would be a fair price.”

Jack’s face fell.

“I s’pose so,” he said dubiously, “but it’s a lot! I meant to pay it in shins, sir, and that would take — how many?”

“ Calculate it yourself, Jack.”

The boy set himself at the task with an intensity almost painful to witness, and after an immense deal of scowling, and a constant wriggling of his fingers (for the doctor had now removed the dog from his arms in order to confine him upon the table in a proper position for his work) he at length broke out —

“ Why, it ’s a hunderd, sir; shines is five cents, that ’s twenty to a dollar, and five times twenty ’s five dollars; ain’t that right?”

“ Quite. One hundred shines; one a day for fully three months, you see.”

The doctor bent over his frightened, whining patient as if utterly indifferent to everything else, while Jack suddenly dropped back upon a high stool that stood near, quite overwhelmed.

“ Wait, doctor!” he gasped, raising a detaining hand. “ Let up jest a minute, please; I ’ve got to think this over a bit.”

The doctor buckled the strap which held the dog firmly to the table, then calmly turned and waited, while Jack drew his ragged cuff across his troubled face, and studied the situation. But this was too much for the dog. Alarmed at finding

himself so completely chained, and dreading some new torture more fiendish than all that had gone before, he set up a wail of extreme distress, turning his almost human eyes piteously from one face to the other. This decided Jack.

“Go on, sir,” he said, drawing a deep breath; “we can’t leave him in that fix, nohow!”

The doctor bowed gravely, as he would have done to the decision of one of his most aristocratic patients.

“Will you hold this handkerchief to his nose for me a minute, Jack? It will keep him more quiet.”

The boy obeyed, watching his every movement with keen, interested eyes. As the doctor finally unfastened the strap and stepped back, he remarked,

“That ’s a neat job, sir. But it ’s a mighty easy way to earn five dollars, I ’m thinkin’! Wish ’t I was a doctor.”

There was a covert sarcasm in the remark which did not escape the gentleman. A gleam of fun sparkled in his eyes, though his face was grave as he answered,

“It *does n’t* seem as hard as shining boots, does it?”

“Well, no, sir; honest, it don’t. Nor did n’t take no longer, either.”

“ But you see, Jack, it has taken nearly twenty years, and many hundred times five dollars to get me where I could do it.”

This was a new way of looking at the matter which at once arrested the boy's attention.

“ I never thought o' that sir ; is it so ? ”

“ Yes, I studied for four years here in America, then went to Europe for eight more, on top of my regular school education, before I ever made a cent of money. I 'm charging now to make up for all that.”

“ Jiminy ! I should think so. Well, I see it 's all fair and square, and I 'll keep my part of the bargain. I 'm ready to begin now, sir.”

“ So am I.” He seated himself and held out one of the boots which he had removed from James' more particular care in order to give Bert's little friend another chance for himself. “ There is one thing,” he went on, as Jack polished vigorously, while the dog, now coming to himself, began to look around with a dazed air, “ you know I often handed you more than a nickel for your shines when I had n't the change ; it 's customary.”

“ Yes, sir, I know.”

“ Well then, to even things up, suppose we call

it seventy shines instead of one hundred. Would that suit you?"

"But the thing is, would it suit you, sir? I ain't likely to complain!"

"Oh, perfectly."

"Then it's a go! And I'll try and do my part as well's you've did yours, doctor," rising from his finished job to lift the dog carefully in his arms.

"That's right, Jack! The little fellow will need kind care for a time."

"I'll look after him, sir. They don't let dogs down to the Lodge, but I know a real good box fur him to sleep in, and I'll give him some o' my grub right along. Well, good-day, and much obliged."

"Good morning, Jack. Happy to serve you!"

They parted thus with mutual courtesy, but as the doctor turned back from the doorway he gave his head a meditative shake.

"It's a crucial test, but I'm doing it for the best. If he is to be my boy's friend we must prove his metal, and see if it rings true. But what must he think of *me*?" He laughed outright at his mental picture of himself as a hard, grasping, miserly individual.

Meanwhile Jack, going down into the slippery

street, was thinking, "It did seem at fust that he might 'a' done it fur less, or nothin' even, though I was willin' to pay; but then, as he says, it took lots o' time and money to git his hand in, and that 's what must be paid fur. Wish 't I hed the chance! I 'd like to do a clean, slick job like that myself, I would. They wa'n't no bunglin' in his fingers, was there, doggy?"

Jack came regularly every day, and faithfully reported the patient's condition, as he bent to his polishing. One morning, to his great delight, he found Bert at the office, waiting for his uncle to take him to the gymnasium where he was about to begin a course of exercises. When Jack told him he had a dog of his own now, the first question naturally was, "What 's its name?"

"Well, I ain't jest made up my mind, yet. I call him Cap, mos'ly, 'cause it 's sorter short and handy, but I don't think it 's much of a name, do you?"

"I 've heard better ones," mused Bert. "How would Nero do?"

"I don't know; that allers seems to b'long to a big dog, somehow, and Cap's a little curly feller, ye see."



“ Oh yes ; where did you get him ? ”

“ Oh, he come along, and the kids was tormentin’ of him. They broke his leg, and I come and got your uncle to mend it; so I ’ve kep’ him, fur I don’t b’lieve he was anybody’s dog before.”

“ How good of you, Jack ! I ’m glad you brought him to uncle.”

“ Well, I knew him, ye see. Then you said he was the best doctor in Chicago, and I guess you ’re about right. He did a slick job, anyhow, and the little feller ’s ’most well now.”

“ Say, Jack, why don’t you call him Tramp ? ” cried his friend in a burst of inspiration.

“ Tramp ? Well, I don’t know. Of course he was a tramp, but he ain’t now, and I don’t think ’t would be right fair to keep a-twittin’ him of it, do you ? ”

“ Oh, but that ’s a name real nice dogs have, Jack. Why, Ralph Penfield has a setter worth lots of money, and he ’s named Tramp. I only said that name ’cause I always thought it nice for a dog — always makes me think of going off on long walks in the country, and chasing squirrels and things.”

“ That ’s so ! ” cried Jack, reflecting the other’s

animated look. "I b'lieve that is a good name, after all, so long 's there ain't nothin' insultin' intended."

The doctor, who had apparently been too busy putting up powders to hear any of this, now looked around.

"So you feel quite repaid for your kindness to the dog, do you, Jack?"

"Yes indeed, sir."

"Yet it takes a good many polishings to make up for one bit of meanness, does n't it?"

"Yes, I've thought o' that. Jest a stone throwed fur mischief and so much to come of it! And say, doctor," looking straight at him with his honest eyes, "don't it seem sorter hard that I hev to pay fur it, 'stead o' that dirty little Pat Lanigan what threw the stone?"

"Ah, Jack, that question has puzzled older and wiser heads than yours — or mine either. The innocent with the guilty — well, it's one of nature's laws. But tell me this, my boy, which would you rather be, yourself with the polishings — and the happy dog; or Pat Lanigan without either?"

"Myself, sure, sir!" laughing out in a hearty

way. "I 've a decent feeling inside of me, anyhow, if my arm does ache sometimes with the rubbing."

"Well then, you have once more proven the old adage, 'Virtue hath its own reward.' But Bert and I must go now; I suppose I shall see you, as usual, to-morrow?"

"Yes, sir, and perhaps Tramp too," winking towards the friend who had suggested the name. "He goes 'round lots with me, now."

But Bert did not wink back. He was very sober as they descended to the street, and after a curious glance, or two, the doctor asked,

"Well, Bert, what is troubling you now?"

"Uncle, did you *charge* Jack for setting the little dog's leg?"

"I did, Bert."

The boy did not look up, but the doctor saw a pained line deepen in his forehead.

"You think that was hard, Bert?"

"Was n't it, uncle?"

"My dear boy, trust me for a few hours, and we will talk it over; perhaps then things will look different to you. There is no time now, for here is the gymnasium."

The kind glance that accompanied these words

eased Bert's sore little heart. It had been a blow to think his uncle could be cruel and grasping, but now he felt sure that all would be made plain. Still, it was a long time for him till evening brought them together again, and, try as he would, when they did thus meet there was a certain constraint in his manner, so new that his uncle could but notice it.

"Well, Bert," he said as, dinner over, they drew up before the bright library fire, "it has been a long day, has n't it? Are you still blaming your old uncle in your heart?"

The child's sensitive face flushed hotly. "No, no, Uncle Tom, I'm sure you're all right, only —"

"Only it does seem hard for a rich man to make a poor little bootblack pay for an act of kindness; is that it?"

"Yes, sir, for Jack, you know. He is my friend."

"That's why I did it, Bert."

The boy gazed at him more puzzled than ever. Finally he rose from his chair, walked to the doctor's side, and laid a small hand on his knee.

"Uncle Tom, did you *need* the money? Were there some big bills to pay?"

“No, my boy, not at all. Besides there is no money coming to me; Jack is to pay in shins.”

“Then, are you afraid that Jack will get too — too —”

“Presuming, do you mean, Bert?”

The boy nodded.

“I hardly think that thought came into my mind, either.”

Then pitying the growing distress in the delicate face Dr. Loveridge caught his boy's hand and held it in a warm, firm clasp. “My dearest son, do you know what the word ‘test’ means?”

“Why yes, uncle, it's to try a thing, is n't it?”

“Yes. Well, I am trying Jack.”

“But why? Had he been naughty?”

“No, Bert. Trying, or testing, is not punishing. Don't you remember, in that little old copy of the *Paladin Stories* which used to be your father's, the tale of the three young men who wanted to marry the king's beautiful daughter?”

“Oh yes, and he sent them away — *way* off, and said that whichever should bring him evidence of the noblest deed done should have the daughter. One came back with the head of an awful great, wicked giant, who had kept the whole country

in terror, and another brought a lot of wonderful jewels from a mine he had discovered, enough to make the princess and all her people rich; but the last brought nothing but his rags and a pockmarked face, and explained that he had been so busy tending the poor sick people in one of the king's own plague-smitten cities that he had not had time to make any search for grand deeds. Yet it was he who got the daughter! I felt sorry for her to have to marry a pockmarked man, till it turned out that he was the one she had loved all the time, and would rather have — pocks, rags, and all — than both the others put together; so that made it all right!”

The doctor laughed.

“Very well told! But now, don't you see that what that king really wished to do was to test these men? His daughter was the most precious thing he possessed, and he was not willing to give her away till he was sure her husband would prove true and loyal and kind. So I have some one who is my dearest possession, and when I see him bestowing a large share of his thoughts, affection, and companionship upon a new friend I want to be certain that friend is honest and true.”

Bert's eyes were shining; evidently he understood.

“ And Jack has stood the test, uncle? ”

“ He is standing it nobly so far, my boy. I am pretty well convinced that Jack is a fine fellow. ”

Bert gave an ecstatic little hop.

“ He will, uncle, he will! Oh, I 'm sure of Jack. And dear Uncle Tom, ” softening his voice into a real girlish whine, “ won't you be just as easy as you can with him? ”

“ Oh, you wheedler! Do you see that clock? It has been calling 'bedtime, bedtime' for a good half hour. Can't you trust Jack with me, my boy? ”

Bert's answer was to throw two arms about his neck, and give him a regular bear hug. His uncle held him close for a long minute, and when the little lad left his side the eyes of both were misty with emotion.

## CHAPTER VI.

## JACK IN HOSPITAL.

BUT the doctor's faith was destined to have a rebuff. The next morning there was no Jack, consequently no shine. Dr. Loveridge felt this in a twofold sense, for he really missed the boy's bright, laughter-provoking face, and his outspoken comments upon men and things, even without the regretful feeling that he was failing in his appointment. As eleven chimed from the marble clock on the office mantel, he stepped to the window and scanned the street with an almost anxious air.

"That boy certainly is not coming! Is he growing tired of his compact, now the dog is well? Will he begin to drop off occasionally, till he fails to come at all, and leave his obligation only partially met, as so many older debtors do?"

While thinking thus in a short lull of his office practice, which seldom left him an idle moment,



he was aware of a faint rapping at his outer door, and listening a minute first, to make sure his ears did not deceive him, he went forward and opened it, to encounter the tiniest, forlornest, dirtiest mite of humanity he had ever seen.

“Be you Dr. Loveridge?” asked the atom in a squeaky treble voice.

“Yes, I am he.”

“Well, say, I’ve got a letter fur you, then. Here it is,” holding out a soiled bit of writing in his grimy little fingers.

The doctor somewhat gingerly unfolded it and read,

“DERE DOKTUR LOVERIG;

I coodent cum caws Ime in horspittal cownt ov being runned over las nite tha picked me up with the paytrole waggin ittss my leg is broke Ille make up the shines bimeby when ever I gits wel.

With respects

JACK GURNEY.”

Something suddenly blinded the doctor, and made him turn hastily away, to fumble for a little with the bottles and pill boxes on the table beside him, while the words “Faithful in little, faithful in much” seemed to form themselves in his brain. But presently he spoke.

“Sit down a moment, please. I ’ll answer this note in person.”

Then he gave some orders to his assistant, donned overcoat and gloves, and, taking his hat, said, “Now, my boy, if you ’ll take me to Jack I ’ll give you a quarter. Is it far from here?”

“Not so very far; he ’s at the Mission hospital, sir.”

“Ah? Then I know the place myself — but here ’s the quarter just the same,” and dismissing the delighted messenger, he strode away.

It was a very pale little Jack that he found in one of the narrow iron bedsteads ranged through the great, clean, airy room, but as the boy caught sight of the doctor’s fine figure in its fur-trimmed greatcoat, the pallor changed to a flush of surprise and pleasure.

“You ’re awful good to come, sir!” he said, eagerly extending a cleaner hand than usual. “I was some afraid little Nate could n’t find you, and I hated to have you think p’raps I was n’t keepin’ my promise.”

“My dear boy,” clasping the hand warmly, “if everybody would be as true to their word as you have been, this world would be a better place. How did this happen, Jack?”

“Well, sir, ye see ’t was slippery yisterday with that thin skim of ice over everythin’, and an ole lady what hed jest got out of a cable car come near fallin’ before she could git to the walk. I was standin’ there, so of course I runned out to help her, and somehow a big dray that was comin’ along hit me a thump and sent me a-flyin’. I did n’t sense much fur the nex’ minute or two, but thar was somebody yelled (the ole lady, I guess), then somebody carried me into a store, and called the patrol that brung me here. It was pretty tough when they set my leg, I tell you, and I kep’ a-thinkin’ of poor little Tramp; but the nurses is real nice and gentle, and I ’m feelin’ fust-rate now.”

“That ’s good!”

The gentleman turned to the ward attendant just passing by, and handed his card, with the words,

“Would you object to my examining this boy’s broken leg a little? He is a friend of mine.”

Jack tingled with pleasure at the last words, while the attendant, after a quick glance at the card, said respectfully,

“Certainly not, Dr. Loveridge; we should be

pleased to have the indorsement of so good a surgeon in this matter."

"Thank you," answered the doctor, and bent to his task, Jack bearing the pain of his delicate handling with scarcely a murmur.

"That's my brave soldier!" said the doctor, when Jack gave an almost involuntary wince and groan, and the boy braced himself to greater fortitude.

"I am glad to find there was no splintering of the bone," said the doctor, looking up at the attendant, as he replaced the bandages. "Nor could your methods be improved upon!" he added with a pleasant smile, which brought an answering one to the attendant's face. "May I speak aside with you a moment?"

Jack, watching them idly from his bed, saw the attendant nod once or twice, as if in response to some request of the doctor's, while it seemed as if something was slipped into his hand, as well, but Jack was not sure of that. Nor did he fully comprehend in the weeks that followed that such constant, unremitting care, and so many delicate dishes were not the lot of every charity patient treated there.

Then Dr. Loveridge came to the bedside again, "Jack," he said gently, "I don't want you to worry any more about those shines you owe me, for I feel you have now fully paid me for my services to Tramp."

"But, sir, you 've only had twenty-two shines, and there was to be seventy."

The doctor laughed.

"But if I forgive the debt?"

"That 's awful good of you, sir!"

"You can pay me better now by doing exactly as you are bidden by the nurses, and trying your best to get well. I think you 'll do this?"

"Indeed I will, sir!"

"Would you like to have Bert come and visit you?"

"Oh, sir, if you don't mind."

"I shall be quite willing; there are no epidemics here now. He shall come to-morrow."

"And Doctor —"

"Well, my boy?"

"There 's poor Tramp. I don't know — Nate 'll kinder look arter him, I guess, but he don't git too much to eat himself." He stopped,

but his eyes asked the favor his lips dared not utter.

“You ’d like to have Tramp looked after? Perhaps Bert will invite him down to visit Nibs awhile, eh?” letting the funny, whimsical look which only his nephew fully knew and understood steal over his face for a second.

“It ’s a good deal to ask,” murmured Jack, “but you ’re so good it makes me bold-like. And when you ’ve nussed a dog and — and — sorter borne things for ’em — you understand, don’t you, doctor?”

“I think I do, Jack. Does Nate come to see you often?”

“Oftener ’n they ’ll let him in, sir.”

“Very well, next time you see him, ask him to bring the dog around to my office, and I ’ll make it worth his while.”

“Much obliged, sir; I ’ll tell him, sure.”

The doctor moved away, and Jack, looking after him, thought, “If I could grow up to be jest like him I would n’t care for the cold an’ hunger an’ drubbin’s now. He ’s the bossiest gent I ever see!”

So thinking, with castles of the future forming grandly in his brain, his eyelids grew heavy, and he slipped away into restful slumber.

The next day Bert came to visit him. He arrived on his pony, and as he passed through the ward in his polished leggings and three-caped "topcoat," as James called it, with his silver-mounted whip carried lightly in one gauntleted hand, every patient in that ward turned to gaze, and forgot for a moment his pain or weariness, in watching the "braw" little figure, and fair, frank boy face.

Jack glowed with pleasure as he greeted him, and the two were soon deep in an exchange of confidences in which the two dogs largely figured.

"Yes, Tramp's all right," was Bert's answer to Jack's first eager question. "Uncle brought him home this noon in the coupé, and such fun as we had making those two dogs acquainted! Nibs was dreadfully jealous, at first, and barked and tore around as if he was possessed, and Tramp kept shying further and further into the corner, scared half to death, till uncle took Nibs up and talked to him. He talked real kind and good, but very firm. He held him by the two paws and looked right into his eyes, and said, 'See here, Nibs, this won't do! This new dog is a guest of yours, and must be treated with consideration. Besides, he's a nice

fellow if he does look thin, and after he has shared your dinners for awhile he 'll be quite as handsome as you are. Now, I want you to give him your paw in welcome, and kiss and make friends at once; do you hear me?'

"Nibs yapped in a meek sort of way, and, as soon as he was let go, jumped down and ran to the corner where Tramp sat, like a soldier on guard, listening to every word. At first he showed his teeth, but after Nibs had smelled around in a friendly way for a minute he stopped growling and began to romp, and when I came away they were as good-natured together as could be, and having a fine time."

Jack's dimples were at play during the story, and when it was finished he laughed out so heartily that the men in the adjoining beds turned to look at him and smile in sympathy.

"Good for Nibs!" he exclaimed; "I b'lieve I 'll git well faster fur thinkin' 'bout the good times Tramp 's a-havin'. Say, Bert, did n't I tell you luck was comin' my way? I 've had every thin' turn up good sence the New Year's when I found you."

"When *I* found *you*, I should think you 'd



better say!" laughed his friend, "and thought you were an old shawl of Dilly's flung down in the corner. But do you think it's good luck to break your leg, Jack?"

"Well, p'raps it would n't seem so, fust off, but jest stop and think what's come of it, arter all. Here I've got a tiptop place to stay in and be took care of; then Tramp is better looked arter than I could do and besides, your uncle has let me off from payin' all those shines fur fixin' his leg."

"Has he?" Bert's face was radiant. "Oh, I knew he would, but I hated to ask him, for fear he'd think I was meddling, and he don't like people to do that. Jack, I've half a mind to tell you something—he did n't say not to, and I don't believe he would care—"

"Well, I'm listenin'; only ef it's about your uncle, and he would n't want you to tell, don't do it! I'd ruther feel all right nex' time he comes to see me, and I could n't ef I'd sneaked into anythin' he was a-keepin' from me."

"But this is n't anything he is keeping, Jack. It's only that I want you to know just how good he is. It was n't the *shines* he cared about, Jack,

nor the money they cost, nor getting pay for his work — it was n't those at all; but he made that bargain with you just to see if you would stick to it. He wanted to *test* you, Jack."

"I 'm glad you told me! I was a little puzzled over that, I 'll allow — though of course 't was all right — but I see it all now. Well, I 'm glad I did n't flunk!" The boy's face shone with the joy of a conqueror.

Jack never forgot the sensations of that minute. He had been tried, and had not failed. Some new feelings, hitherto unsuspected, awoke within him, feelings which lifted him above the sordid daily life with its hardships and "drubbings," and made him for the first time realize that perhaps even he, Jack the bootblack, had that within him which no man could buy or sell, and no circumstance could take away. His inner elation showed only in his face, though; he was too ignorant yet to express it in words. So he merely said, once more,

"Yes, I 'm glad I did n't flunk, and I 'll let the doctor see he need n't worry." Then he relapsed into a quiet that Bert thought was fatigue, so he took his leave, while Jack, glad to be alone, offered no remonstrance.

## CHAPTER VII.

## A VISIT FROM FLOSSIE.

“BERT! Bert!”

The lad, playing with the two dogs in the basement, knew the voice and called up gayly,

“Hello, Flossie! I ’m coming,” as he hastened to mount the stairs in a half-dozen leaps.

“I knew you must be somewhere in the house because your derby was here,” cried his cousin, emerging from the library, radiantly pretty in her scarlet plush cap, and fur-trimmed dress and jacket. “And oh, Bert, what do you think? We’ve found the baby.”

“The baby!” echoed Bert dazedly, for subsequent events had quite driven the conversation of New Year’s Day from his mind.

“Yes, the black-baby we were to find and take care of, don’t you know?”

“Oh, to be sure. I remember now, but when I

asked Dilly about it she just held her fat sides laughing and said 'there wa'n't no babies lyin' 'round loose 'mong her 'quaintances;' so I did n't think any more about it."

"Well, I did, Bert, and I've found one — the cutest little thing you ever did see! And this is the way it happened. There's a woman who has done all mamma's fine washing for ever so long, and we always call her Susie. Last time she came to wash she told us she would have to take it home after this, for her sister had just died and left a baby girl about a year old, and nobody to take care of it but herself. Its father is a hand on one of the Lake boats, and is gone nearly all the time. I kept winking at mamma and making gestures from behind Susie, so at last she asked, 'Has the baby plenty of clothes, Susie?' and she said, 'No, not too many, pore little lamb! But I'm goin' to make her a right smart of things just now.' And then I could n't keep still any longer so I said, 'Oh, mamma, *do* let me!' and mamma laughed right out, and Susie rolled her big eyes around at me and looked full of questions. But when mamma told her about the new kind of doll I was crazy to dress you ought to have seen how tickled she was

—she just shook all over like a big chocolate jelly!”

Flossie stopped an instant to laugh too at the remembrance, not at all because the subject was exhausted, as her next words proved.

“So it’s all fixed and I’ve begun now. I’m making a dress for it, so I’ve brought my sewing along to-day.”

This time she stopped for lack of breath and began rapidly removing her wraps, after which she proceeded to open a gay little bag, fur-trimmed to match her costume, from which she drew out and unrolled a good-sized bundle.

“Why-y!” cried Bert, “’t is n’t white at all. I thought babies’ dresses had to be white.”

“Not always.” With a wise air Flossie fitted on the wee gold thimble Bert had given her, and proceeded to thread a needle. “This one is a pink calico, and mamma says it will be very becoming to the baby’s complexion. O Bert! it’s the dearest, blackest little thing you ever saw! And I’m going to ruffle it. Think of its cunning little head with this ruffle around the neck! ’T will be just like a pink daisy.”

“With a black center,” remarked Bert thoughtfully.

“ Yes. And I ’m going to make it a red flannel for cold mornings, and — oh, and sights of things ! ”

Bert tried to look as interested as she ; so did the two dogs, who had been actively smelling about the bag as it lay on a chair, evidently suspicious of its fur trimmings, and who now seated themselves with eyes very bright, ears erect, and tails restless, just opposite the two.

“ What ’s its name ? ” asked the boy, after watching the stitching awhile with an ever-renewed wonder as to how Flossie could put the needle through so close to her thumb each time, and never prick herself.

“ Its name is Cuvie,” she answered quietly.

“ Q. V. ? Why, that ’s like the college societies. What does the Q stand for ? ”

“ There is n’t any Q, it ’s C,” explained his cousin with a wondering upward glance.

“ Well, do spell it,” urged Bert.

“ C-u-v-i-e,” responded Flossie.

“ Why, where on earth did they get such a name as that ? ” asked the boy, in amazement.

“ I ’ll tell you,” said Flossie, with a gay laugh at his tone, “ it ’s made up of its father’s and mother’s names — Curtis and Veva. ’T was Susie’s own

idea, and I think it's wonderfully clever, don't you?"

"Well, ye-es, perhaps so; more clever than pretty, is n't it?"

"Oh, I don't know. Nowadays people care more to have names odd and new than pretty, I think. Why have n't you been over, Bert? I expected you all day, yesterday, and could n't wait any longer, so had to come to you."

"Well, I've been very busy. My new friend I told you about has been sick."

"Do you mean the bootblack?"

"I mean Jack; I don't call him a bootblack when I speak of him," stiffly.

"Well, I did n't mean anything, so you need n't be so huffy. I forgot his name, that was all."

"It's Jack Gurney," in a mollified tone. "He broke his leg trying to help an old lady across the slippery street, and is in a hospital."

"Poor boy! But is the old lady rich, and will she leave him all her money when she dies?" asked Flossie, to whom life was a continued story, full of charming possibilities.

"Why no, she just stood and hollered till they picked him up, and then went on. I don't believe she even knew he was coming to help her."

“Humph! that was smart!” murmured Flossie with much contempt, as she bit off her thread to begin afresh.

Bert fired again at her tone.

“Just as smart as if she had known, I ’m sure! Jack did n’t stop to think whether she was rich or poor; he only saw she was old and tottery, and ran right along.”

“But I was n’t meaning Jack,” explained misjudged Flossie again; “it was real nice of *him!* I just meant — well, things, you know.”

“Oh!” said Bert appeased; for though neither had read what Emerson says, that “Things mount the saddle, and ride mankind,” they felt it none the less, just then.

So they talked on pleasantly enough, till James appeared with a salver heaped with dainties, and stopped just inside the door to ask,

“Will you be served with luncheon now, Master Bert?”

“Yes, thank you. Set it out on the little round table, James. And look here, is n’t this pretty?” pointing to the pink calico. “Flossie ’s making it for a nice little black baby, named Cuvie.”

James put down the heavy tray, and turned.



full of fond interest, to question and admire. He had lived with the Loveridge family ever since Bert's and Flossie's grandfather had brought him from England, a mere boy, and he loved the two as if they had been his own. Yet all their familiarity with the good man could never make him relax one iota of the respect and dignity which he felt befitted his position as confidential and trusted servant to the family.

When the children finally decided to eat he waited upon them with all the attention he would have shown the doctor himself, and when they persisted in chattering to him off and on, answered invariably, while never venturing a remark of his own.

Luncheon over, Bay Boy was brought around, and a little later the Avenue people were treated to the sight of a nobby yellow cart drawn by a small pony, in which sat a sweet little girl with flaxen curls, and a bright boy whose derby shaded as frank and pleasant a face as one would care to meet.

After a quiet time, in which Bert had been busy "getting the kinks out of Bay Boy," as he expressed it, while Flossie had been admiring the

pretty costumes on the sidewalk, she suddenly turned to her cousin with the remark,

“I should think you ’d ask Uncle Tom to let him come to your house.”

“Do you mean Jack?” Bert was used to her thus springing half-forgotten topics, without any warning.

“Of course. You ’ve got room enough, certainly, in that great house.”

“I wish he could! But then, he can’t be moved, I suppose.”

“Well, but when he can.”

“I almost hate to ask him,” musingly.

“That ’s the queer thing about you, Bert.” Flossie’s tone was distinctly impatient. “You always ‘hate to ask,’ and yet uncle hardly ever refuses you. What makes you that way?”

“Perhaps because he does n’t refuse. I don’t know exactly how to say it, but it seems sort of mean to keep asking when he ’s so good, don’t you see?”

“Well, no, I don’t! Why, he *likes* to have you, Bert.”

“Do you think so?”

“I ’m sure of it. Don’t you know that funny

look in his eyes when he pretends to stop and think about it? Well, that 's just because he is pleased."

"My! but would n't it be nice?" cried Bert. "He could have the gray room right across the hall from me, and we 'd have my snuggerly together. And he could be as long getting well as ever he liked. I 'll ask him this very night!"

But he did not, for the doctor brought two gentlemen home to dinner, who stayed talking in the library until long after Bert was fast asleep. The next morning the lad pulled himself drowsily out of bed in time for his uncle's early breakfast, all in order to prefer his request.

"Hello!" Dr. Loveridge looked up in surprise as Bert entered the pleasant morning-room. "What is it? Tooth-ache, bad conscience, insomnia? What has roused you like this?"

The boy laughed good-naturedly at this raillery.

"Well, uncle, I wanted to ask you something —"

"Knew it — felt it in my bones! How much?" putting his hand in his pocket with a resigned air. "When a man is waylaid before daylight there 's no use resisting."

“It ’s more than money, Uncle Tom.”

“*More ?* Hear him ! ‘Your money, *and* your life,’ eh ? Worse and more of it.”

“Now, uncle, do be sober !”

“Sober ? I ’m scared, petrified ! Can’t you wait till I ’ve fortified myself with a cup of hot coffee ? Even a highwayman would have that much heart.”

Bert had to laugh again, though reluctantly.

“All the same,” he thought to himself, “Flossie says he likes to be asked, and I believe he does.” Then aloud, “Come, then, here ’s the breakfast. Hurry, James, I ’m dying for a chance to speak !”

“Don’t use superlatives, my boy.” The doctor dropped the ironical, tantalizing tone as suddenly as he had assumed it, while he took his seat at the table. “Now, what is it ?”

Bert waited a minute, perhaps to select the best words, then plunged ahead obliviously.

“It’s — could n’t Jack come here and stay till he is well again ? that is, as soon as he can be moved ?” The lad’s eyes were fixed anxiously upon the kindly face opposite his own.

The doctor deliberately made way with nearly a whole bunch of catawbias before he answered.

“Well, it is ‘more,’ with a vengeance! That’s a question that won’t admit of an off-hand answer; did you know it, Bert?”

“But uncle, will you think of it? That’s all I ask. Your thoughts are always about right.”

The doctor smiled with great amusement. “What a courtier! Yes, I’ll think about it, and give you my answer at dinner to-night; will that do?”

“Yes, sir — and oh! uncle, think what it would be if I were hurt, and had n’t any place but a hospital.”

“Yes, my boy, I am thinking — I have been thinking for days. But it is so much easier to open the door to — things — than to shut it again.”

He spoke in a musing tone which Bert knew was not meant for him, so he kept silence.

In fact there was little more said during the meal. When it was over the doctor slid into the overcoat which James held for him, then turned and came close to the table once more.

“I want you to think it over, too, Bert. Don’t act upon impulse in this. A good deed is always worthy of thought and deliberation; mere impulse, unless heaven-directed, seldom rights any wrong. Think well,” and he passed out.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## BRINGING JACK HOME.

A WEEK later Bert was in a flutter of expectation, for Jack was to come that afternoon. The talk at dinner had been a long and sober one, which left Bert feeling very strongly what a serious thing it was to take up another's life and make a complete alteration in it.

He began to understand that Jack was not a mere plaything, or even playfellow, but a soul, about whose future, if he was to meddle, he must feel also some responsibility.

Yet he could not help but be glad, to-day, with all a boy's unthinking enjoyment, that this chosen friend was to come and be one of them for an indefinite time.

The room directly across from his own—the gray room of which he had spoken to Flossie—had been made ready for the invalid, who was now beginning to get about on crutches, and a dozen

times already Bert had trotted up the broad staircase, with its square landings, to be certain Dilly had neglected nothing which could add to the comfort or pleasure of the expected guest.

Certainly the room ought to have pleased even so severe a critic as Bert. It was draped and furnished in a soft pearl-gray, with hints of cherry here and there, to give it warmth and color. The furniture was of cherry beautifully polished, and upon the pearl-tinted walls were two or three brilliant little water-colors of autumnal scenes with vivid foliage, and one pretty Dutch interior in oils. Cherry ribbons tied back the soft gray curtains, and brightened dresser and toilet-table, and a set of cherry shelves at one side held some gayly-bound books. It was restful without being cold, and thoroughly refined and comfortable without being splendid, and Bert said mentally, "Yes, it will do!" as he shut the door for the thirteenth time, and ran down once more to the library.

At length his impatient longing was rewarded. A carriage drove up; he saw his uncle emerge, followed more slowly by a hesitating little figure, which he tenderly lifted down, before handing out the crutches, without which it was evidently at a

standstill. Bert gave two leaps down the steps, only to be met by a quick shout of "Careful, boy!" from his uncle, which arrested him before he had quite upset Jack's uncertain equilibrium.

He then advanced more gently to welcome his friend, and between himself, the doctor, and the crutches, Jack was safely steered up the steps and through the hall into the beautiful library. Once there, the invalid looked all about him with a slow, pleased glance.

"Yes," he said, under his breath, "yes, it's all *so!* I did n't make it any nicer 'n it was in my thoughts," and he leaned back in the easy-chair where they had placed him, with an air of supreme content.

"Yes, we're all here!" laughed Bert, too happy to sit down yet. "Is n't it nice, uncle? Does n't it seem good to be all here together?" beaming down on Tramp, who was now in Jack's lap, nearly eating him up with delight.

The doctor felt something blur his eyes as he watched the group, and as he nodded his answer to Bert's rhapsody, he thought,

"What a beautifier love always is! Bert's face is radiant, and how soft and sweet the expression upon Jack's far from beautiful countenance!"



James, announcing dinner, somewhat calmed them.

Jack greeted him heartily, and James smiled his dignified welcome in return. It was all right, if the master and young master had chosen to harbor Chinamen or Zulus, but it was not necessary for him to gush over them; his place was to serve the two whom he loved best on earth, and that was enough!

Many happy days followed. Jack soon was able to be present at the morning lessons where, at the doctor's suggestion, he took up his simple studies again, under Bert's tutor, and afternoons they rode out in the cart to visit the parks and to watch the skaters on the ponds and along the lake shore. Daily now, however, the air was growing milder, and soon all skating would be a thing of the past, for spring, bonny spring, was rapidly approaching. The boys looked forward to it as the young always do. Bert told long stories of his country outings, while Jack, whose only impressions of the growing season were of a greater display of hand organs and baby cabs, fresh vegetables and hucksters' wagons, listened as most boys listen to tales of daring and adven-

ture. Sometimes the doctor left his work to take them to some afternoon entertainment, also, for Jack was daily growing stronger, and plied his crutches with an ease and agility which hardly made them seem an incumbrance.

Yet the little bootblack appeared to enjoy the evenings best of all. He would get the doctor to talk about his own work and experiences, whenever he could, and would listen with rapt attention while he described some of the strange cases met with in his practice. Jack's usual comment, after a deep breath, would be,

“Oh, I say, that 's splendid! How I wish 't I could do suthin' like that.”

This constant interest set Dr. Loveridge to thinking, and one evening, when Jack had been with them some weeks and could get around nicely with the help of a cane, he asked abruptly,

“Jack, what are you going to do when you 're a man? Have you ever thought about it?”

“Yes, sir, I 've thought lots, but” —

“But what, my boy?”

“I don't see how I 'm going to do it, sir,” looking up with his honest eyes; “ye see, it costs such a heap of money.”

“For what, Jack?”

“For making me a doctor, sir.”

“Oh ho! so that ’s your idea, is it?”

“It ’s what I ’d like, sir, but ’t is n’t what I expect. I used to think I ’d save up till I could buy a peanut stand and roaster; then I ’d go on, perhaps, till I got a fruit-stall, and then, after a great while, if I was lucky, I ’d start a grocery store; but somehow, lately, I don’t care so much about them. It seems ’s if ’t would be so sorter satisfactioning to cure somebody when every one thought they was goin’ to die, and make ’em all so happy. And then ef they paid a good round sum fer the job, why, I would n’t complain, of course” — with a laugh — “not ef I was sure I ’d earned it!”

The doctor echoed his laugh, but fixed a thoughtful gaze upon him, too.

“A physician, eh? And that means probably twenty years of hard study. Does n’t that scare you, Jack?”

“Studyin’ ain’t so bad, sir, when you ain’t too tired with trampin’ all day, like I was sometimes at evenin’ school. But of course I could n’t do it, and take care o’ myself too. Wish ’t a fel-

lar did n't hev to eat and wear clothes; then 't would n't take so much!"

"But you see the body has got to be looked after as well as the mind, Jack, or what would become of the doctors? Don't you see? It's one wheel within another, like Bert's Chinese puzzle. Well, I've been thinking you over lately, and have a plan in my head. What do you say to helping me at the office for awhile?"

Jack looked at him, too amazed to answer for a minute, and the doctor went on.

"I really need a boy to attend door, keep up the grate fire, run errands, and so on, and have only been waiting till I should find the right one. I expect to pay what is equivalent to six dollars a week, to begin with, but if I took you in I could do a little better, perhaps. I could give you your board and three dollars in money. After your early morning work was over I would let you have from ten o'clock till after luncheon to come home and study with Bert. How does it strike you?"

"Oh, sir, it's — it's too good!" answered Jack, with a choke, while Bert, who had been breathlessly listening, came and pressed close to his

uncle's side, after a fashion he had when intensely pleased, or grateful.

"But, Jack," putting an arm around his nephew with an almost involuntary impulse, "it won't be all easy sailing. I shall expect you to be at the office by seven every morning, and that means only a cold bite for breakfast, as the maids are scarcely up then. Besides, there is a good deal of dirty, unpleasant work to do, and it must be well done; I never allow shirking."

"I know you don't, sir."

"And, Jack, if you are to live with us I shall expect you to be a gentleman in every way, in speech, in manners, in morals, in heart" —

"Please, sir," with meekness, "I'm not up on proper talk much; my grammar's a little off, I know, and I guess I mix the slang in too thick for your taste, though I don't begin with the rest of the kids. Then the forks and spoons and things is pretty tryin' at table, sir, and all that. But when it comes to being square, and straight, and all wool and a yard wide, why, I guess I can most make it, sir; I b'lieve I can!"

Jack's cheeks were flushed with enthusiasm, and Bert broke out impulsively,

“I ’m sure he can, uncle ; just try him !”

The doctor laughed heartily as he looked from one eager face to the other.

“I ’ve about decided I will, my boy, but I expect Jack will begin from this night, and make a desperate effort to talk as we do. You are quick at almost everything, Jack ; show your quickness in this. Nothing betrays ill-breeding like these little tricks of speech. Let a man seem ever so wealthy, so well dressed, or polished, and if he says ‘I done it,’ or ‘Between you and I,’ he at once betrays himself.”

“How should he say them ?” asked Jack, speaking every word slowly and distinctly.

The doctor smiled appreciatively.

“He can only use ‘done’ with a have or had before it, and he should say ‘Between you and *me*,’ always. You ’ll learn why when you come to study grammar, which I think you had better begin at once. Until then you ’ll have to take my word for it.”

“I ain’t — I am not afraid to do that, sir.”

“Good !” patting him heartily upon the shoulder. “You are beginning excellently ; just keep it up and you will be an elegant converser before

you know it. Bert, what are those dogs at now?"

"I declare, uncle, I believe they smell a mouse behind that bookcase! Hold on, Nibs, you 're scratching up the carpet awfully. Jack, make Tramp be quiet, he 'll knock that pedestal over and smash Schiller!"

"Here, Tramp, come here, sir!" called Jack with authority. "Had n't I better put 'em both to bed, doctor? It 's time."

"Yes, Jack, thank you. And see here, this is Friday; you may begin your new duties Monday morning. If we go a little slow at first I do not think they will overtax your strength."

"And you 'll let me black your boots just the same, won't you, sir?"

"Why, if you like, Jack, but it is n't necessary."

"But I 'd like to, doctor."

"All right, then — hist! there *is* a mouse! It ran like a streak behind the coal basket."

"Sick 'em, Nibs! Rats! Rats! Go for 'em, Tramp!" yelled Jack and Bert together, rushing after the frantic dogs, all new elegancies quite forgotten.

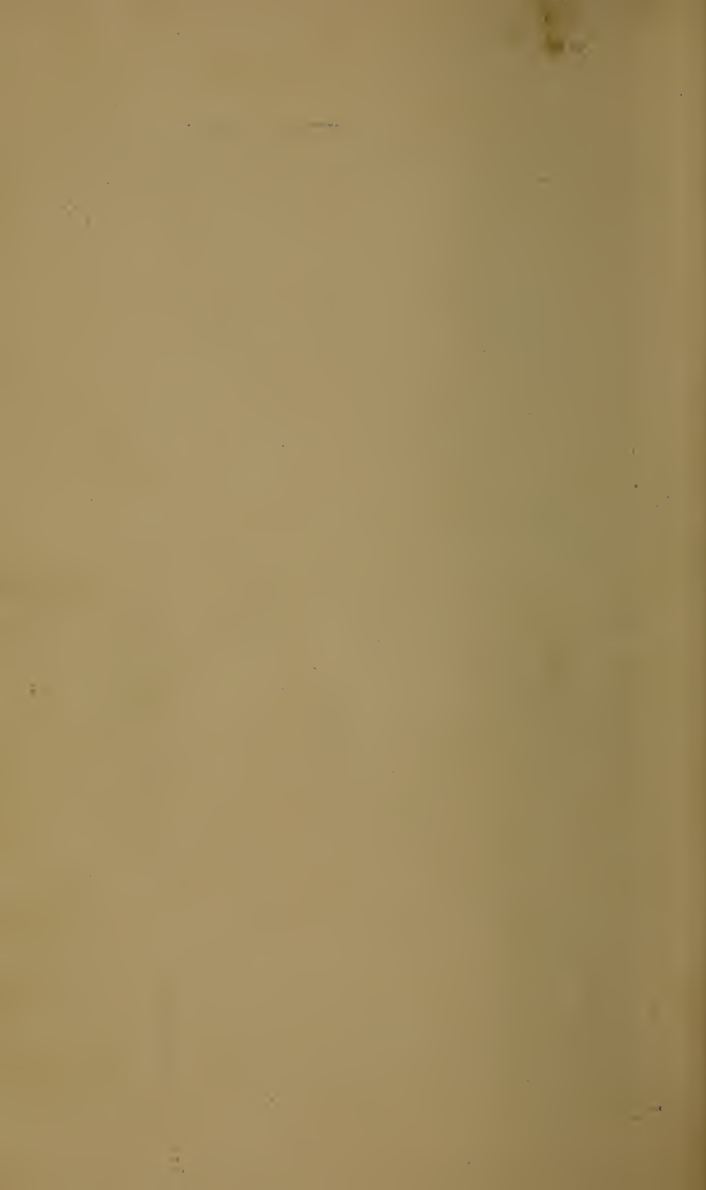
Thereupon ensued a chase and scramble which

lasted many minutes, resulting in a badly demoralized room, and a pair each of breathless boys and dogs, while the laughing doctor held by its tail, which was much like a bonnet wire, one miserable dead mouse about as large as a filbert!





“BREATHLESS BOYS AND DOGS.”



## CHAPTER IX.

## A STORY AND A DINNER.

“WELL, Jack, we ’ve had a day of it, have n’t we?” said the doctor with a laugh, as the two entered his tidy coupé for home after office hours, a few days later. “How do you like it, anyhow?”

“First-rate, sir; ’specially when you lets me help mix the medicines. And it ’s boss — I mean nice — when the doorbell don’t ring too fast, and you can explain a little. But Je — that is, but how many sick folks there must be, sir, when there ’s such lots for your share!”

The doctor laughed.

“Possibly I have more than my share, Jack. Did you begin the physiology this morning?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And grammar?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And how do you like Mr. Dansard for a teacher? Does he keep you at work?”

“Pretty well, sir, but he might make us do more, I ’m thinkin’. He took up much as fifteen minutes telling a story, and ’t was a whopping — that is, ’t was a considerable of a lie, too.”

“A lie? Why, what was it about?”

“About an old giant named Atlas that used to spend his time holdin’ up the sky, and there was a man come — came — along that was n’t a giant, but awful big and strong, and he coaxed old Atlas to let him take the sky awhile, for he wanted the giant to go and get him three gold apples off some ’ers. The man’s name was Herk — Herkus — ”

“Herakles, perhaps?”

“That ’s most it, but not quite.”

“Well, Hercules then; its Latin form — Herakles is the Greek.”

“That ’s it! Hercules. Well, they shifted the sky as careful as could be so there did n’t more ’n one or two stars fall and nobody thought there was much of anythin’ a-happening, and then Atlas went away on his errand after the gold apples, and felt like he was off on a picnic. But he had n’t more ’n got out of sight when Hercules began to think what a fool he ’d been. Well, he got awful

tired, for the sky was suthin' — something — of a load, I tell you, but he stood faithful and never seemed to think of letting it roll off into the ditch, nor nothin'. And after the old giant had got the apples, and rambled 'round a while, enjoyin' hisself, he came back to his old stand. But after he 'd took — no, taken — a good look at Hercules and seen how round-shouldered he was getting, he thought he 'd like to git shunt — now how should I say that?"

“‘Be rid of ’ would do.”

“Yes, well, be rid of it for good; so he said he 'd take the apples to the feller with the long name —”

“Eurystheus?” murmured the doctor.

“I guess so. Hercules thought that was too thin, but he knew 't would be best to try a little coaxing; so he said, Why, yes, that was all right, but the fact was, he was n't doing the job just to suit himself. He 'd tried his best, but they was n't anybody really up to holdin' skies except Atlas. Besides the pad wa'n't on straight, and it ought to be shifted a little. It really worried him, for he had n't a doubt there 'd been a lot of complaints down below there, 'cause the stars was n't so

stiddy as usual; and so, as he hated to be found fault with, would n't Atlas take it for just a minute till he could fix the pad and get a better cinch on it?

“Of course Atlas did (for he was a reg'lar stoopid, if he was big), and Hercules was in such a hurry to get rid of it that he bounced it off so hard it unsettled nearly every star, and there was a dreadful time of storms and fiery comets. But when he felt himself free how he did laugh an' stretch himself! And then he told old Atlas he hoped he 'd tend to his bus'ness in future, and not try the shirk game on again, and ran off. So the giant is holdin' it up to this day. Now, sir, I leave it to you, is n't that a pretty big yarn for a *teacher* to tell?”

The doctor leaned back and laughed till the tears came.

“Oh, shades of poetic Greece!” he murmured between his paroxysms. As soon as he could command his voice, he said more quietly,

“My dear boy, don't blame Dansard for the large proportions of that story. He was but giving you and Bert a bit of mythology — that 's all. How did he come to tell it?”

“’T was while Bert was reciting his history; I did n’t notice just what brought it up. It seems a big yarn, but of course it ’s all right, if you say so.”

“No, don’t take my word for it, but listen.” The doctor then proceeded to tell him something of those old fables, and how the unlearned people endowed trees, flowers, and all natural objects with life and personality, having some story to account for each change of season, and for every storm, eclipse, or convulsion of nature.

Then they agreed to hunt up the Atlas Mountains together, and try to imagine their towering peaks reaching into the clouds, and suggesting the idea of the vast, patient old giant upholding the firmament.

“And, Jack,” said the doctor as they stepped from the coupé at the home door, “I can see you found a little lesson in the story too, did n’t you?”

Jack’s eyes were on his face as they slowly mounted the stone steps.

“I don’t know; perhaps so. Do you mean to just do your duty and never mind, and not keep trying to get rid of it when it galls you?”

The doctor only smiled his answer, for just then the door swung wide, and the two dogs tore down to meet them, while Bert, in the doorway, called gayly,

“Come, hurry up, Jack! We’ve got an invitation for to-morrow. Will you go?”

It proved to be from Mrs. Barmore for dinner the next night, and included all of the “bachelor establishment,” as she dubbed it. It happened that so far Jack and the Barmores had never met. About the time of his arrival at this new home Aunt Chrissie had taken Flossie for a visit to friends in a neighboring town, and they had but lately returned. He looked dubious over this invitation, and Bert, catching the expression, said quickly,

“Say, Uncle Tom, don’t you think Jack ought to have a new suit of clothes? Those things of mine won’t last him forever.”

“Not yet,” interposed Jack as quickly, “I have n’t earned enough yet. I’ll tell you, Bert; I can stay home jest as well ’s not, and eat with Dilly. I would n’t want more ’n a cold snack — that is, luncheon — and she ’d be willin’.”

“Then *I* won’t go,” said Bert conclusively,



giving a little impatient kick at Nibs, who was playfully sniffing about his heels.

Nibs, much injured, ran off with a surprised "Yap!" and gazed reproachfully from the corner, while Tramp, sitting proudly on Jack's knee, smiled superciliously at his mortified rival.

"Let 's take a look at you, Jack," said Dr. Loveridge, good-naturedly, at which Tramp suddenly found himself sprawling on the carpet as his master sprang to his feet, thus giving Nibs his chance to exult.

"A little out at elbows surely," remarked the doctor, with a smile. Then he made a small mental calculation and added, "You have worked for me now two weeks, Jack; have you saved anything?"

"Yes, sir, I 've saved four dollars; had to spend the other two for handkerchiefs and car-fare."

The doctor smiled. He had noticed the handkerchiefs, and the boy's evident satisfaction in them, more than once. That they were palpable cotton with the gayest of borders did not affect this pleasure in the least, unless to enhance it.

"Well done!" he cried genially. "Shall I advance you ten more?"

Jack looked frightened. "I — I 'd ruther you

would n't, sir. You see it 's so much harder workin' for money you 've already spent, and something might happen 't I could n't make it good. These 'll do for the office till I get enough ahead, and I need n't go into sassiety jest yet," letting a funny grin overspread his face.

"See here, uncle," cried Bert, suddenly rousing from a brown study, "there 's that navy-blue cut-away of mine that I 've outgrown; I believe it would just fit Jack, now he 's so thin, and I had to give it up before it was worn at all. Wait, I 'll get it." He was off with the words.

Fortunately the coat did fit excellently well; so it was decided without more ado that all three should assist at the dinner.

The next night found them in Mrs. Barmore's luxurious drawing-rooms, Jack quite dazed before this beautiful lady and child, and keeping shyly in the background, while Bert talked and laughed more eagerly than usual in order to cover his friend's evident embarrassment.

He managed also to catch his aunt alone once, and whisper, "Please put Jack opposite me at dinner, Aunt Chrissie."

"Certainly, dear," with a little laugh. "Do you

want to coach him on etiquette? Wait till I get my Mrs. Sherwood."

"Well, auntie, only a wink now and then—and really you should not make fun of Jack! He is very quick indeed, Aunt Chrissie, and wonderfully polite for a street boy, but you could n't expect him to be up in all the latest fads, now, could you?"

"Probably not," she answered, looking across to the group before the fireplace, where her husband, a tall, pale gentleman with a small bald spot showing at the crown of his dark hair, was sitting in earnest conversation with the doctor, Jack, standing close by, gazing alternately from one face to the other as if eagerly drinking in every word. "He does seem bright; he certainly has a speaking face. Flossie, dear," turning to her little daughter, who was looking over a basket of photographs in apparent oblivion of the guests, "why don't you go and talk to Jack?"

Flossie raised her great eyes, and took a calm survey of the young stranger.

"What shall I say to him?" she asked in a wondering tone.

"Say? Why, what do you say to any boy, child?"

“If the boy is Bert, I talk about almost everything; if it is anybody else I answer his questions and get away as soon as I can.”

Her mother concealed a smile.

“I ’m sorry you are not more polite, my dear. Go now, and makē Jack feel welcome and at home.”

Thus admonished, Flossie rather reluctantly crossed the room, and began a conversation with the abrupt remark,

“I saw your dog the other day.”

“Did you? Where?” asked Jack, interested at once.

“Over at uncle’s. I don’t think he ’s quite so pretty as Nibs, but I s’pose he ’s just as nice.”

“Well, I like him,” observed Jack, trying to speak very correctly, while at the same time making a desperate effort to keep his hands out of his pockets. “Of course he ain’t handsome, but he ’s knowing. Then we ’ve both had our legs broke — broken — and that gives us a feller feeling, I guess.”

“It must,” said Flossie with her brown eyes fixed on his face in a gaze more curious than she was aware of. “Bert told me about your getting

run over; have you ever seen that old lady again?"

"The old lady? Who? Oh, you mean the one that was slipping on the ice. No, I never have."

"It seems too bad," observed Flossie, tossing back her flaxen curls, and coming a step nearer. "She ought to have — have thanked you, I think."

Jack laughed a little, and concluded his hands felt best hanging straight down.

"Well, she did her best; she hollered like a wild Indian when I was run down, and then, I suppose, she had to run, herself. There don't seem much time to stop and say thank you down on them — those — busy streets."

"I suppose not," said Flossie, with her bewitching little air of serious contemplation, "though you may feel it all the same."

The gentlemen had stopped talking now, and were smilingly watching the two, Flossie so daintily fair and sweet, and so charmingly dressed to the very toes of her bits of bronze slippers; Jack so uneasy in his good clothes, and still bearing that unmistakable air of the street in spite of illness and indoor refinements, yet with something

so sturdy and true in the homely face that one could n't but like it.

"Yes," he said, his eyes fixed upon her with great admiration, "sometimes it seems to me you feel it so hard you can't say it; leastways that 's the way I do, when Bert or his uncle is extra good to me."

"Uncle Tom is always good," said Flossie, with a little jump upon the sofa, where she alighted fluffily, like a bird, "and Bert is — generally."

"I never saw Bert bad!" put in Jack loyally.

"Oh, no, not that; only sometimes he is n't as good as other times."

"No, I s'pose not," admitted Jack reluctantly. Just then the maid announced dinner.

Two weeks' practice had given Jack some knowledge of the "spoons and forks and things," as he put it; nevertheless it was with something like inward trembling that he took his place at the table, brilliant with silver, cut glass, and flowers. As he sat, decorously waiting to be served, there came over him the memory of another scene which had occurred not so long before.

It was one dreary winter's day when the air was raw with snow and sleet, and nobody remained

upon the streets an instant longer than was necessary. It had been hard to find any boots to shine, and he had been driven out of stores and offices until, utterly worn and discouraged, he stopped in the shelter of a deep doorway to breathe upon his freezing fingers and wonder what next?

Just then little Nate had come along, with his tears fairly congealed on his cheeks, and seeing the always friendly Jack, had stopped to tell of his poor luck, and the hunger which was gnawing at his little stomach.

Practical Jack then asked, "How much you got, anyhow?" and the little fellow had pulled out a few coppers.

"Let's pool!" said Jack, and took out two nickels. "There! together that's seventeen cents; that'll give us a cup o' coffee an' two sandwiches — come on!"

He remembered, now, how they stood by the counter in the bakery and drank the coffee between them, gulping it down in great hot swallows that came near blistering their throats, and how soon the sandwiches melted away, though they had the usual toughness of their kind.

From that momentary vision of cold and want

he awoke to the more vision-like reality of this sumptuous feast, each course ushered in with fresh splendor of silver and porcelain. Something in his absent look caught the host's attention and he watched him furtively, wondering what thought it was that gave this half-pained, half-protesting look to the frank young countenance. At length curiosity prompted the question,

“Is there anything you are not helped to, Jack?”

“Oh, no, sir, I—I've got everything; more than enough! I was only thinkin'—”

Jack stopped abruptly, and flushed to his hair, for he had half betrayed himself in the sudden confusion of being addressed by this dignified gentleman.

“Can't we hear your thought?” asked the latter, quite gently.

“Oh, sir, 't was just a—a memory. I got to remembering one day last winter, and it all seemed so queer and different. Sometimes things do be so dretful onequal in this world!” As Jack grew in earnestness he returned to his old vernacular.

“Oh, do tell us about it!” cried Flossie, who felt sure Jack must have countless adventures to relate, if he only would.



“Yes, Jack, do!” put in Bert, with an affectionate glance. “It’s awfully nice to hear his stories about old times, Aunt Chrissie.”

The lady smiled encouragingly, and Jack, all a-quiver with bashfulness, briefly told the little incident, ending with an apologetic, “I could n’t help thinking of the difference, ma’am, though of course it’s all right!”

For an instant the room was quite still, even the silent servants moving more softly about the table. This little glimpse into another life, so cold and hard, seemed to shame the surplus luxuries of this.

Jack dumbly felt that he had made a blunder, had introduced something foreign and discordant into the brilliant scene, and cast such a distressed glance about the table that the doctor could but come to his rescue. He gave a blithe laugh.

“It was jolly that you could scare up even seventeen cents, was n’t it, Jack? And I’ll warrant this whole dinner, excellent as it is—” with a bow to the hostess—“does not taste as good to you as that sandwich and half cup of coffee; now does it?”

A relieved smile, which soon deepened into

laughter at Jack's evident unwillingness to answer, went around the table.

"Tell the truth, Jack!" exclaimed the host with exaggerated gravity. "Remember G. Washington!"

"Yes, Jack, you know you always tell the truth," added Bert, "and you need n't mind Aunt Chrissie; she did n't cook the dinner, anyhow!"

At this even the servants had to laugh, while Jack looked as if caught in a trap; but he had no lack of bravery, so he said, in his honest way,

"Well, they could n't help but taste good when I was so near starved; and then, you see, I ain't quite eddicated up to these fancy messes yet. Good beefsteak and pertaties, or even tough sandwiches, if they 's enough of 'em, will do me any day. But that 's just 'cause I don't know any better, of course."

"There 's where the law of compensation steps in, and tries to equalize things," observed the doctor, when the laughter had subsided; "the rich man has the food, and but little appetite, perhaps even dyspeptic pangs, to accompany it; the poor boy has the health and hunger which makes the plainest meal delicious. Not even *consommé*,

blue points, and quail can hold the balance down against beef and bread, you see!"

"Not when it's a poor, ignorant little street kid that holds 'em!" said Jack, with a look and tone which gave the homely words a fine touch of courtesy.

Later in the evening, while the elders sat alone by the extension-room fire, leaving the children to their games and chatter in the larger parlors, Mr. Barmore remarked, "Do you know, Tom, I like that little chap? He has the right stuff in him! What are you going to make of him?"

"He wants to be a doctor, Frank."

"I'm afraid he's too honest for that profession," with a sly twinkle; "why don't you let him come with me?"

"And learn the gentlemanly way to steal, instead of the nicest way to lie?" Dr. Loveridge answered the challenge. "No, thank you, there *may* be an occasional honest broker; I know there are two or three truthful doctors! No, no, let him stay on with Bert. They hit it off well enough!"

"I must say, though, it's a hazardous experiment," remarked the lady, looking up from the

shimmer of colors in her lap, and holding her needle thoughtfully suspended that the silken thread might untwist. "How do you know what mischief he may teach Bert?"

"Chriss, my dear," said her brother, smiling upon her, "why must you always feel so sure that poverty and vice go hand in hand?"

"Because they do — often."

"No more than wealth and vice, only that in the latter case the monster is gilded over. I would sooner trust Bert with Jack, even though the flavor of the streets is in all he does and says, than I would with many a pampered, vitiated son of wealthy, unwise parents!"

Mr. Barmore's head was nodding gravely. "You're right there, Tom!"

"I know this is an unusual step, but I am a pretty good reader of human nature — one can't be a physician for ten years without learning something — and, if I don't mistake, Jack is by nature a little gentleman."

"Still in the rough!" laughed Mrs. Barmore. "There! don't be provoked. I like him too — or shall when he has been polished a little more; I confess it does give me the shivers to see him eat. Only suppose he is *not* all you think him?"

“Well, even then” —

“Would you expose Margaret’s child to his influence?” she put in quickly.

“No; but neither would I take away Jack’s chance — and it is because of Margaret I say so!” was the reply, as he rose and ended the conference.

## CHAPTER X.

## ON FOOT AND IN A CARRIAGE.

JACK had been at his new duties a fortnight, or more, and was rapidly forgetting even to limp, when one morning, as he was hastening across State Street on his way home for the morning lessons, he suddenly encountered Mike.

“Hello!” cried that youth, stopping at once.

“Hello!” responded Jack, still keeping on his way, and showing little enthusiasm over the meeting.

But Mike was not to be thus disposed of, and caught him by the arm with no gentle grasp.

“Humph!” he remarked, looking the smaller boy over contemptuously, “where ’d you get them togs, hey?”

“Never you mind,” said Jack, beginning to get angry; “they are mine, and they ’re paid for, so you can just let me go and leave me alone; I ’m in a hurry.”

“Oh, you be, hey?” getting a tighter hold. “Sôt up fur a dude, hain’t you? Got all the airs of a ’risterkrat a’ready. Well, there’s two or three o’ the kids jest around the corner what wants to see ye, so come on!” With an evil leer on his low-browed visage, Mike began pulling him along.

Jack knew well enough what this meant. If there were any boys waiting they were of Mike’s own stamp, and that suggested only a heavy pomeling for Jack, and the complete spoiling of his new suit of clothes. He might have stood the beating, being pretty well used to such treatment in the past, but the defacement of these hardly-won garments was a calamity too great to be thought of!

Jack watched his opportunity, when Mike’s hold was slightly loosened by his running into a fat man making fast time in the opposite direction, and, giving a quick jerk, wrenched himself free. He then started off on a run, but his enemy was not so easily baffled. Mike ran after, and, having the longest legs, was rapidly overtaking Jack when the latter, in desperation, turned, doubled up his fists, and placed himself on guard.

“Don’t you dare to touch me again, Mike Eagan!” he cried, shaking the fists angrily in his tormentor’s face. “If you do I’ll knock you down and call a cop, see if I don’t.”

It was just at this instant, when Jack, with coat still awry from Mike’s grasp, and face flushed with angry decision, stood blustering and defiant opposite the evil-looking ragged boy, that a carriage drove by in which sat Mrs. Barmore and Flossie.

Poor Jack! His face turned a still deeper scarlet, then white, his doubled-up fists dropped limply to his side, and he would have fallen, an easy prey, into Mike’s hands, but that at the moment a blue-coated officer roughly bade them move on, and not obstruct the sidewalk.

Thus protected Jack hurried away in an opposite direction, almost blinded with his sense of shame and chagrin.

Had they seen? Did they recognize him? It had been but an instantaneous vision on his part, just as the open carriage flashed by, but who knew how long they might have been watching the scene? Oh, if he had only gone around the corner and taken his licking! Dilly would have



mended up the torn clothes, but who could mend this impression he had made on the two whose approval meant so much to him? Flossie and her mother had seen him fighting with that dirty, wicked Mike, and they would never believe in him again! They would of course tell the doctor, and what would he say? Why, that he was not fit to be Bert's friend and companion.

"Oh dear!" groaned Jack, a great lump growing in his throat until he felt almost suffocated.

For a moment the despair and disappointment (for he had tried so hard to do just right that this accidental encounter came with all the crushing force of a severe disappointment) made him half wild. He thought seriously of throwing everything up, and going back to his old rough life, where he could never suffer from the sense of failure, as he did now. Of what use was the hard trying, the constant watchfulness, if a thing like this, which might happen any day, was to upset it all in an instant?

"It is n't fair!" he thought, with a blind feeling of rage against something, or somebody he could not even name; "it is n't fair to trip me up like this when I'd just got a-going!" and as he

ran recklessly across the crowded street to catch the cable car, it was with the thought that he would about as soon be run over and killed, as not!

The two mile ride calmed him a little, but hardly eased his burden. Should he tell Bert, and enlist him on his side in advance, or should he simply keep still and let things take their course? He was still debating the question as he ran up the front steps, and was admitted by James. Mr. Dansard had arrived, and Bert was bent thoughtfully over his books, so there was no time to speak now.

The room used by the boys for their lessons was a chamber on the second floor, which formed a sort of connecting link between the front and rear halls. It was carpeted with India matting, and contained two desks, with seats, placed next the wall where the two windows were. One of the narrower ends was filled in by bookshelves, and at the other was Mr. Dansard's armchair and baize-covered writing table. On the tinted walls hung plenty of maps, geographical, astronomical, and physiological, with a blackboard between, while a couple of revolving globes, one represent-

ing the heavens, the other the earth, occupied two of the corners, a steam radiator filling another.

It was a bright, sunny room, and Jack, who had learned to love it, had never entered it so sick at heart as on this morning. He had been progressing rapidly in his studies, and Mr. Dansard, who had a calm, kind manner and was an excellent instructor, was learning to like his new pupil almost as well as the one of longer standing.

He greeted the boy now with a smile, and the words,

“A little late, Master Jack! Was there a long wait for your car?”

“N-no, sir,” stammered Jack, feeling his face grow hot again, “I — was kept.”

Bert looked up curiously, and Jack, feeling disgusted with himself for his self-consciousness, dropped into his seat and tried to bury himself in his physiology. But Mr. Dansard had noticed the flush and the hesitation, not without some wonder. Was Jack getting tired of his studies, and had he been tempted, perhaps, to “play hokey,” as he would have called it, and then thought better of it? He resolved to speak to the doctor, if it occurred again.

When Jack came forward to recite it was still more evident that he was not his usual self. All the brightness, the alertness, of his accustomed mood were gone. He did not ask one of his naïve questions, but recited the lesson parrot fashion, with a vague, dreamy look in his eyes that showed his thoughts were far away.

Mr. Dansard felt troubled. Twice he stopped the boy and sounded him to see if he understood the lesson, and the replies were far from satisfactory.

“Jack,” he said at length, “you are not attending! You have repeated that sentence twice without seeming to gain an idea from it; what is the matter?”

There was no answer. Mr. Dansard had been speaking with his eyes on the book; now he looked up. Was it possible? Jack’s chin was quivering, and his eyes winking hard — evidently he could not speak. It seemed such a strange mood for the gay, careless, high-spirited Jack that the tutor could hardly believe his senses.

“Never mind now,” he said quickly in an altered tone, feeling real pity for the boy. “Sit down and work on your arithmetic awhile, and then we’ll talk this over.”

Jack, with one grateful, flashing glance, hurried to his seat. His back had been towards Bert, so he hoped his little friend had not noticed, and now he *would* swallow that lump and be himself again! After all, he had n't been really bad, whatever they might think, and perhaps the Barmores had not even seen him in that crowded street—and so comforting himself, he was gradually able to overcome this sense of oppression, and pay better attention to his lessons.

They had barely finished for the day when the doctor's voice was heard below, speaking to James.

“Ha! there 's uncle,” cried Bert, jamming his books into the desk. “He 's got some treat for us sure, Jack, or he would n't be home to luncheon. Good-morning, Mr. Dansard!” and he bounded downstairs, two steps at a time, Jack following much more slowly, so that this bit of conversation came to his ears before he entered the library.

“What 's up, Uncle Tom?” was Bert's abrupt greeting.

“Well, coal is about as high as anything just now,” was the calm reply, as the doctor poked the fire into a brighter blaze.

Bert laughed. "Now don't tease, uncle! I thought — I expected — say, *are n't* you at home for a lark?"

Jack, now crossing the hall, caught the non-committal look on the doctor's face.

"*Have* we larks for luncheon, Bert? They are a rare bird in America; I really believe I prefer quail. Where is Jack?"

"Coming — but do tell me, uncle, is it a stereopticon show, or the bears at Lincoln, or the stockyards, or" —

Just then Jack entered, somewhat shrinkingly. For the first time since he had been received into the house he felt outside of all this. For the first time while in the presence of these two a feeling akin to bashfulness fettered his tongue, and he only smiled a little and bent to pet Tramp, who ran from the rug to greet him, followed of course by jealous Nibs, who must be noticed also.

The doctor, absorbed in his teasing, a pastime of which he was master, failed to notice Jack's manner.

Bert ran on,

"Now come, uncle, what is it? How can you torment us so?"

At which the gentleman remarked in a reflect-

ive tone, "Have you noticed how warm it is outside?"

"Yes, indeed! We had to turn off every bit of the steam; why the sun's really hot!" cried Bert, who, like all boys, was impatient for the quicker coming of the spring.

"Quite balmy! Well, I thought perhaps a drive to Jackson Park, and then a sail" —

"Oh-h! uncle, how splendid!" Bert was dancing a jig on the rug. "There could n't be anything nicer! Don't you hear, Jack? A ride to the club house and a sail on the lake! Why don't you hurrah? And can we take the dogs?"

"Oh, spare us!" laughed his uncle. "But we'll ask Flossie, if you like."

Jack had looked up brightly, but at this dropped his head again and turned towards the window. Yesterday Flossie would have made the party complete; to-day he trembled at the thought of what she might say, how she might act.

"Of course we must have Flossie; eh, Jack?" said Bert slyly, for the latter in a burst of confidence had lately informed his friend that he thought her the sweetest girl he had ever seen, and Bert enjoyed teasing him about her now and then.

“Of course,” was the answer from the window, but something in its tone made the doctor say,

“Perhaps Jack would like something else better than the sail and” —

“Oh, no — no, sir! was the quick reply; “nothing could be nicer!” This time the voice was hearty enough to remove any doubts from that gentleman’s mind.

An hour later they were in the carriage before the Barmores’ door — that is, the doctor and Jack were in the carriage, while Bert had gone in after his cousin. He soon reappeared with her, and the two awaiting them thought she looked prettier than ever in her new spring hat and jacket. She gave a gay greeting to all, and there was absolutely no difference in her manner, that Jack could see.

Instantly Jack’s depressed spirits rose to fever heat, and from that moment he was in his gayest mood. For he thought, “It’s certain they never saw me, and now all I’ve got to do is to be a good boy all the time, which is easy work among such nice people, and keep off Mike’s beat all I can.”

It was a delightful afternoon. The sun shone with almost the heat of June, as it does occasion-



ally in April, perhaps to give us a hint of what is to come, and the boulevard was gay with every kind of pleasure vehicle.

As no heavy wagons, trucks, or omnibusses are allowed on these beautiful Chicago avenues, except as necessity requires a visit to some dwelling, when they must turn off at the next block, our friends met little else than handsome carriages of every description, from teetering carts with a funny little "tiger" perched up behind, to tally-ho coaches covered with a merry crowd blowing their horns in constant warning. But at times some humble express wagon or grocer's cart, converted for the nonce into a pleasure carriage, and filled to overflowing with a happy party, dashed by with much noise and laughter.

On the bridle path at one side, bordered by turf in its first spring freshness, were many equestrians of both sexes ambling happily over the soft road-bed, while the sidewalks on either edge of the broad thoroughfare were lively with children, nursemaids in their white caps, and baby cabs.

"*Is n't* it pretty?" asked Jack, leaning back with a sigh of pleasure.

"The world knows few handsomer streets,"

returned the doctor, glad to see the boy's appreciation.

"Oh see!" cried Flossie, "they 're at work on the flower beds."

"Sure enough! See uncle!" responded Bert, "I wonder what they 'll make this year! I hope they 'll have the flag again. I thought that was fine."

"I liked the boat too," observed Jack, "with the men rowing. Once Nate and me — I — came to a mission Sunday-school picnic in Washington Park. We took the grip to the terminus, and then had park phaetons for the rest of the way. My! but we had a good time. I never thought then I 'd come like this, though."

"It 's nice you can, Jack," said Flossie, giving him a kind look. "But speaking about the flower beds, uncle and I liked the sundial and the ribbon beds best, did n't we, Uncle Tom?"

"What! Better than Jumbo?" questioned the latter with a laugh.

"Well, he *was* fine!" acknowledged Flossie meditatively; for this ingenious flower bed, planted in such a manner as to give a fair resemblance to the old elephant, had been a great wonder and delight to all Chicago children.

So they gayly chatted, stopping to let the horses drink at the fountain before they bowled rapidly along the smooth park drives to the club house beyond. Here they soon found a trig little sail-boat, with a sailor to manage it, and Jack was treated to his first trip on the blue waters of grand old Lake Michigan.

It was just the day for a sail, with a fresh, steady breeze, and as they cut cleanly through the waves which, as their prow met them, seemed to bow to either side and part, as might a line of courtiers before their king, Jack felt that he was only just beginning to understand all the joy that life might give when the soul and body are young, pure, and healthy.

Flossie was a little timid, and held to the crimson-cushioned stern seat on which she was placed with the grip of desperation, until her uncle, seeing the strained attitude, drew her closer to him, as he sat by the tiller, and so interested her in watching the management of the sails and the beautiful view of shore and wave spread far around her, that she finally relaxed her vigilance and leaned trustfully against him, reassured and happy once more.

After the sail there was a nice little treat of cream and cakes in the pavilion, which though not yet in running order, had waked up that day to a spasmodic energy. Then back home again through the approaching twilight, watching the lights flash out in the windows of the beautiful homes they passed, and admiring the ever-charming vista of street lamps seeming to converge to a point down the miles of straight broad avenue before them.

They took Flossie home with them to dinner, and while at table she made her first reference to what had been in Jack's mind at intervals all the afternoon, by saying,

“When mamma and I were down town, this morning” (how Jack held his breath for a second!) “I was waiting for her before the dressmaker's in the carriage when one of those waffle wagons came along, and stopped to bake some for the people in the next house. It made me hungry, for they did look awfully nice, so I gave Patrick some money and teased him to go and have the woman in the wagon bake me one, and make it thick with butter and sugar. He was afraid to, till I promised to stand between him and

mamma if she came out and was angry; but I know how long it takes her at the dressmaker's, so I did n't much think she would! 'T was such fun to watch that woman flop the thing over the funny little stove, and then pass it to her husband (I suppose it was her husband) to shake the sugar over! Then Patrick brought it to me, and when I tore off a little piece for him I noticed he grinned and took it, though he kept his eyes on the dressmaker's door every minute. But, oh dear! I don't believe anything ever tasted so good to me, unless it 's this dinner, for I'm just as hungry now as I was then."

"I've bought them -- those -- waffles too," said Jack eagerly, "days when I had a good trade. They 're mighty good, but not so fillin' as some things, so I only had 'em for a treat once in a great while. There was one woman -- perhaps the very one you saw -- used to be real nice about it, and make 'em extra thick for us kids, and if we lacked a cent of the change she 'd laugh and say to her husband, 'Oh never mind; let the bairn have it onyhow,' so kinder motherly that we all thought lots of her."

"Did she wear a striped red and black dress,

and have white teeth and braided yellow hair?" asked Flossie eagerly.

"I disremember about the dress, but the hair and teeth's correct," said Jack.

"Then I do believe she's the very one!" was Flossie's triumphant conclusion. "I have sometimes thought," playing daintily with her after-dinner coffee spoon, "that if I ever have to work for my living, I should like to do that. It must be such fun to go riding about in that big wagon and have your cooking things right with you, so as to have a meal whenever you get hungry; and I'm always hungry riding," she added pathetically. "She had a baby's sock she was knitting on between times; I don't like to knit one bit, but I think I could stand it in a wagon."

As soon as the doctor could get the laugh out of his voice he asked, with an attempt at gravity,

"But didn't you tell mother about it at all, Flossie?"

"Oh yes, after I'd eaten it," was the naïve reply. "She was n't exactly pleased, and she scolded a little about my 'making a spectacle of myself in the street,' but then you see I'd had the waffle!"

Flossie tossed her uncle such a funny, triumphant look that it was hard for him to keep even the slight expression of disapproval he had tried to assume.

## CHAPTER XI.

## CUVIE.

YES, the days were growing longer, softer, sweeter, with every roll of the earth through space, and this Jack often felt in more ways than one, for his mind was now free from worry. Nothing had come of his fears over that chance meeting with Mike, and he could only believe that the Barmores had passed him by unnoticed.

His desire to tell Bert about it left him with his anxiety. In the first place, he was growing to dislike all reference to that past life, desiring to outgrow and forget it, as he was outgrowing and forgetting the tricks of speech and manner belonging to it; and, in the second place, no opportunity presented itself immediately, and by the time it did, the sting of the memory was fading from his heart. He was so happy in these days! There seemed some new flavor in the cup of life, some new perfume in the atmosphere surrounding him,



and he quaffed eagerly, and reveled to his fill. The dimples were seldom smoothed out of his cheeks, the broad, good-humored mouth was scarce ever quite closed over the gleaming teeth, while the honest gray eyes were like diamonds — only less cold and hard — in their brightness. From morning till night the willing feet and hands seemed never to tire in service for those whom he now looked upon as his own, his to love and be loyal to so long as life should last!

The boys were oftener at the Barmores, now that the days were lengthening, and Flossie was always ready to accompany them on their drives or walks. One day, when Bert had come with her in the cart to take Jack home from the office, she said abruptly,

“Oh Bert, let’s go and see Susie and the baby!”

“Why, where do they live?”

“Over on Fourth Avenue. I forget the number, but it’s south of Adams, and I’ll know the place when we get there; do go!”

So Bert turned to the west, and they soon found themselves in the rather unsavory precincts of this avenue, which is largely given over to Chi-

cago's colored population. Guided by Flossie, they finally stopped before a tenement house from whose windows looked many a face in all shades of black and tan.

"It won't do to leave the pony hitched here, will it?" asked Bert, glancing dubiously about.

"Yes, there's a cop — policeman —" spoke up Jack; "he'll keep an eye on it, if you ask him."

Bert acted upon this hint, and the three mounted a long flight of crazy steps to the second story.

"Susie has a front room," explained Flossie, with some pride in the fact. "This way, boys," and she preceded them down a long, narrow passageway to a door at its end.

Here, after a moment's waiting, they were ushered into a room which, at first glance, seemed ablaze with gay colors, for the windows were draped in red calico, while a cheap carpet in which this shade predominated covered the floor, not to speak of chromos, "tidies," and knickknacks in a very dazzle of decided hues.

Susie greeted them warmly, and drew forward her best chairs for their occupancy, and they all seated themselves in comfort, for, in spite of the

odor of suds and frying ham from the inner room, the little home had a warm, cozy look. Even fastidious Bert glanced about with a pleased smile, thinking the snow-white table-spreads with their cotton fringes quite an improvement on those foreign things at home with their faded-looking embroideries.

“So you ’ve come to see Cuvie?” said the good-looking mulatto woman in her soft voice. “I ’ll go pick her up, if you ’ll ’scuse me a bit. She ’s into the neighbor’s on a visit.”

Before the three amused young people had time for more than a passing remark, or two, over the green and yellow dogs and white plaster Samuels on the wooden mantel there was a rush of little feet across the back room, and in came the fattest, cunningest, curliest yellow baby they had ever seen. She wore one of Flossie’s red flannel dresses, with shoes to match, and after her hasty entrance stopped bashfully, covering her round little visage with her dimpled hands, her bright black eyes peering curiously at them through the fingers.

“Why, Cuvie, you are n’t afraid of *me*?” cried Flossie, approaching her with outstretched arms, at which the baby backed away till stopped by the

wall, making little half-articulate noises of protest as she did so.

“It ’s the young gentlemen as she minds,” said the proud Susie, getting down on her knees by the child.

“Now, honey, be a little lady, that ’s a dear lamb, and let ’em see your pretty face, won’t you?”

Cuvie gave a harder grunt, and a disdainful shrug, but just as the watching group felt that coaxing was to be all in vain, she suddenly dropped her two hands to her sides, and flashed a smile upon them, which showed four of the smallest and whitest pearls in the world between her full red lips.

She was so arch, so bright, so pretty in her baby coquetry that everybody laughed with pleasure and crowded about her, begging for a kiss, or a word, as if she had been a little queen on her throne, rather than a poor mite of a colored baby in a tenement house full of bad odors!

Then she relented to them, and condescended to show off all her accomplishments. First she danced a “breakdown,” holding her dress up daintily, the steps being a series of uncertain hops and skips which shook her fat little legs like jelly

molds ; then she sang for them some unintelligible baby gibberish, which Susie translated into the familiar Mother Goose rhyme of "Little Miss Muffit," though no one would ever have suspected its origin ; and, lastly, she crowned all her efforts by three "curtchys," as Susie called them, the last one being so low, and the child meanwhile so full of giggle that she was topheavy, and tumbled over sidewise and lay in a fat little heap on the red carpet, laughing helplessly.

The three other children were at once beside her, and there followed much such a frolic as you 've seen when four puppies are dumped into a barrel together, only here Cuvie was the central figure and received all the rolls, pushes, and "cuddles," usually more impartially bestowed.

But she liked it, and grew brighter, saucier, and more full of laughter all the time, while her admiring auntie could only ejaculate, amid her merriment, "Oh, the lawful suz ! See that, now ! Ain't she the cutest, though ? Would you believe it ?" and so on.

At length Flossie declared her sides ached, and Bert suddenly bethought him of the pony. As he stepped to the window to look up and down the

street, and see if Bay Boy was demeaning himself properly, he suddenly called out,

“Oh Jack — Flossie — come here; is n't that pretty?” and following his beckoning finger, they saw just across the way the glitter of three gilt balls, which caught the level rays of the setting sun and shivered them into lovely golden arrows of light.

“Oh, how they dazzle!” cried Flossie, while Jack gave a little laugh, and remarked,

“That 's ‘my uncle's,’ you know. That 's what the kids call the pawnbrokers' shops, always.”

“Do they? How funny! Were you ever in one?” asked Flossie curiously.

“Oh yes, lots of times,” answered Jack, and turned away with some haste, as if from a distasteful subject; so no more was said about the matter, though they were all to remember the brief bit of talk at some future day.

## CHAPTER XII.

## IN THE TOWER ROOM.

ONE beautiful, summery morning the doctor said to his young assistant, as he was leaving the office for home,

“I wish, Jack, that after lessons are over this afternoon you would go to my sister’s and take this note. There ’s no great hurry about it, only I want her to have it before evening. You need n’t return here to-day; Floyd is to be with me.”

“Very well, sir,” returned Jack, much pleased, and tucking the note into his pocket, he hurried homewards.

When he told Bert at luncheon what he had to do, adding, “And perhaps I ’ll stay awhile,” his friend observed,

“Well, then, I believe I ’ll have a ride on Bay Boy, it ’s such a fine day; and perhaps I ’ll come around that way home.”

So Jack went whistling down the avenue, and

across to another much finer one, where he soon came to the handsome residence he was learning to look upon as a second home.

Mrs. Barmore's house was far more pretentious than her brother's, both as to style and situation. Dr. Loveredge had clung to the old homestead, merely a square stone front in a block, on an avenue now largely given over to boarding houses and business, while Mr. Barmore had gone further south, and built one of those turreted, terraced buildings something between a Moorish castle and a Queen Anne cottage, which give variety, and a certain charm to Chicago's newer avenues. She laughed at "Tom's" high, light-papered walls with their large-paned windows in rows, and railed at his basement dining room and kitchen, which he returned by poking fun at her oriels, and casements, and greenish, darkened rooms full of odd angles and corners, declaring that so much high art was oppressive to one of his cheerful, unromantic nature!

Jack privately thought the doctor's cheerful square rooms with their soft carpets and long, crimson-hung windows, much prettier than the many-sided ones at the Barmores', with their



waxed floors, over which small islands of faded rugs were always slipping about, and their small diamond-lighted windows too high to look through, though he would not have said so for the world. Was it not Flossie's home, and therefore a little Eden?

When admitted, he was directed, as usual, to Mrs. Barmore's "bodower," as the boys called it, a small tower-room against whose curving, tapestried walls were set odd little cabinets of quaintest shape, holding cracked, and (to Jack's eyes) exceedingly ugly china, while spindle-legged tables supporting more hideous pottery stood tottering about, filling up what small space was left.

Here Jack found the lady seated at a convenient, but alas! quite modern folding-table, busily engaged in painting more china as much prettier than the prized antiquities about her as roses and sunset tints are prettier than monsters with forked tails, and blue thunderclouds of background!

She looked up with a smile, and a careless, "Ah, Jack, that you?"

"Yes, ma'am. I've a note from the doctor."

She beckoned him to a circular wall seat, wedged in between the tiny fireplace and a cabinet, while

she proceeded to read the note. Then looking up, she said,

“Tell him it’s all right; I’ll go and see the person he speaks of this evening. Can you remember, or shall I write an answer?”

“Oh, I can remember, if that’s all, Mrs. Bar-more.”

“Very well, then I can go on with my painting, for I’m anxious to finish this cracked-ice pail this afternoon. Where is Bert?”

“He went for a ride on Bay Boy, and said he’d come around after me later—that is, if you don’t mind my staying awhile.”

“Not in the least, Jack. But Flossie’s out. She went to a little rosebud party at Nina Beecham’s—just twelve girls at table—and won’t be back till evening. But, let me see—don’t you want to look at the etchings in that portfolio?”

“If you please, ma’am, I’ll get that book on Great Men of all Ages,” returned Jack.

“Very well,” laughing a little. “How you do pore over that book, Jack!” for the ponderous volume was nearly always in his hands during some portion of his visits.

Jack laughed too. “Well, it’s kinder—that

is, it 's pleasant and — and interesting to know how they got along so far; and then so many of them were just poor, homeless boys to begin with, you see."

The lady lifted her eyes from the porcelain pail in her delicate hands to give him a keen look.

"Do you want to be a great man too, Jack?"

He blushed a little. "I don't expect I ever will, ma'am, but I 'd like to try."

"Don't say 'ma'am' so much, Jack," a little sharply; "give people their names only. Nothing shows low breeding like those things. Not but that you improve rapidly, Jack," in a kinder tone; "indeed you do."

"Yes, ma' — Mrs. Barmore, thank you."

"Why do you sigh so, child? I did n't mean to scold you!"

"Oh, no, 'm — that is, no — I did n't think of that; but there 's such a sight of things to remember! Somehow these men in here," thumping the cover of the volume which he now held in his hand, "did n't seem to spend so much time on those things as others."

"What others, Jack?"

"Well, studying, and — and getting on, and

finding out things for themselves. Do you s'pose, if Dr. Jenner had had to stop and think about how many 'nots' and 'nevers' to put in every sentence that he 'd have found out about vaccination, and saved so many lives?"

Mrs. Barmore smiled, and gave him an interested glance. "My dear, those things came to him almost by instinct, for he was a gentleman born. You have years of unfortunate associations and habits to overcome, Jack."

The boy looked depressed. Mrs. Barmore, somehow, always affected him in this way. Though she was invariably good-natured and kind, he never felt so poor, so unrefined, so helplessly degraded, even, as in her presence. When with the doctor he was often made conscious of his defects, yet they never seemed so intolerable a burden. With Bert he forgot them entirely, while with Flossie he felt that though they were there, they yet formed a part of himself not wholly displeasing to this daintiest, but most unconventional of maidens. Still, he liked Mrs. Barmore, with a feeling largely compounded of admiration and awe, and tried his best to please her, often only to do his worst from his too nervous eagerness.

He was just beginning his precious book when Letty, the waiting-maid, appeared in the curtained doorway leading from the hall.

“Mrs. Barmore,” she said, “Mrs. Ford is at the door, and asks if you will go for a drive with her. She would like to show you the new house at Kenwood.”

“Dear me! Then I can’t finish this pail! But yes, tell her I’ll go. Say I will be ready in five minutes, Letty. Go ask her if she will not come in; then hurry back and bring my boots and wraps.”

Letty withdrew, and Jack came forward.

“Can’t I help you put these things up, Mrs. Barmore?” he asked, knowing how particular she was in leaving her painting so that no careless touch might work ruin upon it.

“Why, yes, thank you, Jack. Put that cobalt-blue in this compartment. Did you know, by the way, that cobalt was considered an unlucky mineral? The Germans call their mischievous spirits Kobalds from this word. I’ll tell you all about it some time. Now lay those finer brushes carefully in this box — that’s it!”

She worked rapidly herself as she spoke, moving her fingers with a delicate precision that won

Jack's admiration. He loved to watch them, usually sparkling with jewels as they were. One ring especially delighted him. It was a slender hoop upon which was set an opal, surrounded by two circlets of diamonds whose brilliancy was dazzling. He had often spoken of its beauty to Bert and Flossie, even saying to the former,

“It must have cost a heap, Bert.”

To this the lad had replied carelessly, “Yes, I expect it did; some hundreds or so.”

He noticed that, to-day, this was the only jeweled ring she wore, and he thought it was quite enough adornment for even such beautiful hands as Mrs. Barmore's.

“There, Jack, that will do, and I'm much obliged!”

She went towards a recess beyond the chimney, as she spoke, and drawing aside a rich, but dull-hued curtain, proceeded to wash her hands at the lavatory behind it. Letty brought in her wraps as she appeared again, and helped her on with them.

“Well, good-by, Jack,” she said, turning in the doorway. “Stay as long as you like with your dead heroes!” laughing pleasantly. “Oh! by the way, I forgot that turpentine bottle. Won't

you please put it in the lavatory cupboard, and shut up the table and slip it behind the tapestry over yonder?"

"Yes, Mrs. Barmore, I will," said Jack in return, handing her the gloves she had dropped. "Good-by!"

He was standing close to her and smiling up into her face with such an admiring, wistful look in his eyes that it touched her. Yielding to a sudden motherly impulse she stooped and pressed his forehead lightly with her lips, then saying "good-by" again in a really tender voice, hurried out.

Jack stood still a moment, fairly dazed with surprise. It was the first kiss he ever remembered receiving from a woman, and to come from Mrs. Barmore! Could it be true? A warm wave of happiness flowed over him, and at that minute he could almost have died for the beautiful lady, so grateful, so adoring was his mood!

Still in a daze, he took up the bottle and put it away, as directed, closed the table and hid it in its niche, then picked up the book, and sat with it a long time unopened in his hands while he dreamed happily of what the future might hold in store for little Jack Gurney.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## ACCUSED.

WHEN Mrs. Barmore returned, not two hours later, he was quite absorbed. Almost unconsciously he had moved his chair nearer and nearer the inconvenient windows, and now was straining his eyes to catch the uncertain daylight they admitted.

“Dear me! Jack, you ’ll spoil your eyes,” she remarked briskly. “Have you been reading all this time?”

“Nearly all, yes ’m — yes, Mrs. Barmore.”

“And has nobody been in?”

“Not a soul. Bert is late, is n’t he?”

“Oh, not so very; it is n’t six yet, but this room is always dark early.”

She passed through the apartment, entered the lavatory, and after staying some time, came out.

“Jack,” she said in a sharp, anxious tone, “did you say no one had been here?”



“Yes, I said so,” looking up surprisedly. “I’ve been alone.”

She stood opposite him, tall and stately in her long lace wrap, and the light from the high window fell full on her face. It was quite white.

“Jack,” she said again in an intense way, “are you *sure* you have been alone?”

Jack colored with confusion at her strange manner, and began to doubt his own convictions in the matter.

“I think so — yes, I’m sure, unless — did Letty come back after you left? I really don’t remember. Is it — does it matter?”

“*Matter!*” She passed him with a quick movement, and touched a button in the wall. The maid soon appeared.

“Letty, were you back in here for anything after I went away?”

“No, Mrs. Barmore,” promptly; “I went to the sewing-room, as you told me, and basted the lace in your gray silk, and fastened on the steel bodice, and I’ve just finished, ma’am.”

“Very well, that was right. Please take these things upstairs,” handing her wraps.

She waited till the girl’s steps had died away outside, then came and faced the lad again.

“Jack,” she said peremptorily, “what have you to tell me? Remember, the truth is always best, and deception will not avail you now. I *know* all about this thing!”

Jack looked at her aghast. Had she gone crazy? Was he having a hateful dream? The dim room oppressed him, and he began moving backwards towards the door, feeling as if he should stifle here, so frightened was he. But Mrs. Barmore caught his arm.

“No,” she cried almost fiercely, “you cannot escape so easily!” In her excitement she gave him a shake which made his teeth chatter. “Jack Gurney, you shall not leave this house with my property upon you! To think how we’ve trusted you, almost loved you—” She stopped with a choke, just as the electric lights, turned on through the whole house by the switch in the hall, flashed out, making the room as bright as day.

In this light they stood for a moment quite motionless, the lady white, stern, angry, merciless; the boy flushed, frightened, shrinking, confounded—and in that instant the doctor and Bert came in. Both stopped in amazement.

“Chrissie!” cried the doctor in a shocked voice,

and "Jack! Jack!" added Bert in a frightened one, running to the side of his friend.

"Tom," the lady dropped Jack's arm, and turned to her brother, "Tom, I am glad you have come! This boy of yours is dishonest; he has taken my ring, the beautiful diamond you brought me from Paris."

"It 's a wicked lie!"

The words rang through the room, startling Jack himself as much as the rest, for he had not known they were coming from his lips, though they had been so quickly formed in his heart, and the boy straightened himself proudly, his face now whiter than the lady's own.

"Chrissie! Jack! Be quiet. There is some dreadful mistake. Where was your ring, Chrissie? Try and tell me quietly all about it."

"Listen then! I was painting here when Jack brought me your note, and, some time after, Bernice Ford came to take me for a drive. I went into the lavatory to wash my hands, and, as I always do, removed my ring first. In my hurry I left it lying there, and just as I was leaving the room here I noticed the turpentine-bottle, and asked Jack to put it away for me. I presume he did so,

and as he would have to go into the lavatory to put it up, he must have seen the ring lying on the marble and been tempted by it; you know how he has always admired it. I soon missed it under my glove, but did not worry, remembering so distinctly where I had taken it off, and knowing the servants would have no cause to come here; so when I returned I went directly there, but it was gone! I looked and felt everywhere, then came and asked Jack if he had been alone all the time, and he said yes. Then, when he realized the drift of my questions, he began to waver, and thought possibly Letty might have been here. I rang for her, and questioned her at once, and her manner convinced me she had been in the sewing-room every minute. There is no other way of entering that lavatory except through here. I could not believe my senses at first, but what *am* I to think?"

"Simply that you have overlooked the ring," said the doctor easily. "You are too hasty, my dear sister! There, Jack, my boy, don't tremble so; it will all come right. Sit here while I go and help Mrs. Barmore in her search." With the kindest touch, he led the stricken boy to a chair.



"I'VE GOT MY FIDDLE."



Jack dropped weakly into it, and covered his face with his hands. Stricken indeed! Could he be the same happy creature who had sat here tingling with pleasure only two hours ago? Could this accusing woman be the same who had bent and kissed him with such graciousness that he had felt like calling her mother? Was it all to end like this?

An arm stole around his neck, and drew his head to a new resting-place, and a choked voice whispered,

“Don’t, Jacky dear, don’t feel so bad! Uncle Tom will make it all right; and anyhow I’ll never believe it of you, never!”

Jack leaned heavily against his friend, feeling as if he could have clung bodily to this true comrade in his utter misery. It was quite still now in the lavatory. The doctor’s cheerful, reassuring voice had ceased, and soon the two came out together, both grave, silent, and perplexed.

Jack looked up eagerly, but dropped his head at once; his question was unnecessary.

“Jack,” said the doctor in a constrained voice, “we cannot find it now, but —”

The boy interrupted him by springing to his feet.

“I never thought — why don’t you search me if you think I have it?” He turned almost defiantly to Mrs. Barmore, then, without awaiting an answer, began hurriedly turning his pockets inside out.

“He has had plenty of time to take it away and hide it,” remarked the lady in a cold, almost scornful tone.

She was not pleased at the manner in which her brother had treated her disclosure, and it seemed to her time that she resented it. If this resentment fell upon Jack, instead, did he not deserve it? Not a doubt remained in her mind that he had taken her ring. Every circumstance was so clear to her: the laying it aside to wash her hands, which had become almost an unconscious habit; the last request to Jack involving a visit to the lavatory; his pretended absorption in his book upon her return; his flush of confusion when she questioned him; his attempting to drag Letty into it — oh! it was as clear as daylight.

She felt very sorry, even sore, over it, for she had really begun to be fond of the boy. But there! what could you expect? He was of the street, a nameless waif and stray. He had seemed for a time to rise above his inbred instincts, but they



had asserted themselves at last; a sudden temptation had vanquished him. He had thought she would believe she had lost the ring while away from home and that he would go scot-free, and now that he was so thoroughly convicted of his crime he was too great a coward to confess it. Out of all these rushing thoughts had come the cold and cutting speech.

“Auntie, you are cruel!” cried Bert with a sob. “You don’t know Jack. I never saw an honest boy! He keeps everything straight to a penny, and he won’t borrow of me, or get into debt anywhere, he’s so afraid he can’t pay. He goes without things he wants awfully rather than do that. He has been tempted over and over again — ask uncle, he knows!”

Bert broke down here, and cried outright.

“It was a sudden and overpowering temptation, doubtless,” admitted his aunt in a softer tone. “Many older and wiser people have fallen through such. If Jack will confess and return me the ring, I will try and forget it, and give him my confidence again as I shall see he deserves it.” She turned relentingly towards the accused lad.

“I can’t confess!” said Jack miserably, almost

wishing he could. "I have n't a thing to tell, only that after I had put the bottle away, when I never saw, or thought of the ring, I sat down and read till you came back. I don't think I even moved, except to wheel my chair closer to the window. I could n't tell more if I was to be hung, ma'am!"

The utter misery in Jack's face brought tears even to the doctor's eyes.

"Leave him to me, Chrissie," he said with firmness, "he is frightened, overwhelmed! Come, boys, let us go home."

He took up his gloves, and drew his sister to one side. "It is a very mysterious affair, my dear," he remarked in an undertone, "but I can't believe the boy guilty. I have, as Bert says, tested him again and again. I will tell you about it all some day. Still, if it was, as you think, a sudden, almost irresistible impulse which led him to secrete your ring, this is no way to get at the truth. He is frightened nearly out of his senses now. Leave him to me, and I believe that, if there is anything for him to tell, I can get it from him more readily in a different way."

"Very well, Tom. Perhaps I was too fierce,

but I was so alarmed, so —so disappointed, and I would rather lose almost anything than that ring! Yes, take him away; I feel as if I never wanted to see him again. I don't like experiments, I confess!" Throwing out her white hands with a half-disdainful, wholly protesting gesture, she gave a bitter little laugh and left the room.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES.

THERE was little said on the way home, but at the dinner table, later, the doctor broke, without preamble, into some incident of his life abroad and was rarely entertaining. Jack thanked him in his heart, though he could not frame a sentence. He felt crushed and hopeless. The encounter with Mike, which had so troubled him, was nothing to this. His whole life was spoiled now, certainly; the best of trying could do no good.

Some people say that childish troubles are light and evanescent compared with those of maturer years. I do not think so. There are some young griefs which leave deep scars on the soul, whose anguish is never quite forgotten in all the after years. When grown people have trouble they have a horizon to bound it; they can compare it with something gone before, through which they have lived to find happiness again, and this helps

them to endure the present pain; but the young have no bounds to their trial, and it stretches before them, seemingly as long and limitless as life itself.

Poor Jack had been wounded in his tenderest part, and the thrust had gone deep. Through all the varying hard fortunes of his short life he had hugged one secret boast to his soul, and held his head high on the strength of it—his honesty. No one yet had ever accused Jack, the bootblack, of stealing a penny, and it had been a frequent source of pride to him to notice how often in those days the hucksters, bakers, and stall-men had left their goods in his care, when called elsewhere, feeling sure that not so much as a bun, or a peach, would be missing on their return.

“No,” he said to himself bitterly, “nobody thought I could steal then; but now that Jack is a gentleman, they accuse me!” and he turned from the luxury before him with a sick longing for the freedom and comradeship of the streets.

When they returned to the library the doctor made an errand to send Bert upstairs, then came to Jack, where he stood forlornly before the grate, not even noticing the dogs' frantic efforts to attract

his attention, and laying a hand kindly on his shoulder, said,

“Jack, my boy, don’t look so despairing! There is something very puzzling about this, but it will doubtless be righted in a few days. No one who has a clear conscience need ever despair. The only great harms that can come to us are through sinfulness; remember that!”

Jack looked up with a gleam of relief in his eyes.

“My conscience *is* clear,” he said earnestly. “I can’t understand it any more than you can, but I *know* I am not to blame. I did not even suspect she had left the ring behind. It seems queer, too, that I did n’t see it when I went in with the bottle, for it always glittered so.”

“But the lavatory is not very light, you know,” returned the doctor, “and even a diamond cannot shine in the shadow. But don’t let it worry you too much, Jack; I am sure it will all come right.”

Just then Bert returned, so Jack had only time for a “Thank you!” before he took his seat. But the kind words had brought him comfort, and through the rest of the evening he could even talk a little, and smile at the dogs’ antics.

Bert, too, managed to get in his word as they went upstairs to their rooms, for the night. Slipping his arm about his friend, he said softly,

“You need never think, Jack, no matter what happens, that I will turn against you. I declare, I believe I should love you if you really had stolen! But I know you have n’t.”

Jack felt the tears dangerously near his eyes as he whispered back, “If ’t was n’t for you I could n’t stand it, Bert!” Unable to get out another word, he hurried into his pretty gray room and shut the door.

The next morning the doctor was leisurely drawing on his gloves, while sniffing the freshness of the morning air in the open doorway, when he saw his brother-in-law coming around the corner.

“Ah, Tom, just going for your car?” was his greeting. “Glad I caught you; we can go down together.” As the doctor joined him on the sidewalk, he added in a lower tone, “This is a bad business, Tom! I found Chrissie in a great taking last night, and pooh-poohed at her as much as you did, I imagine, from what she says. I told her rings were always rolling off into corners, and so on, but, I declare, I had to draw in my horns

finally! If there 's a half inch of that place I 've overlooked, then I 'm a monkey! After I gave that up I tried to make her think she 'd lost it out driving, but you can't budge her there. She remembers that Jack picked up her gloves just as she left the tower room, and she drew them on in the hall, stopping to button them in the vestibule. The question is, where has the thing gone to?" He looked at his brother with a perplexed line between his eyebrows.

"I can't believe Jack took it," said the latter firmly.

"Nor I; and that 's the puzzle of it. If he did, I 'll never trust my reading of human nature again; for if I ever saw honesty written on a face, it is on his. But, as Chrissie says, sometimes there are sudden temptations which prove irresistible. Poor little beggar! I am sorry for him either way. There 's one thing, though, Tom," he went on after a little, "he may be in the power of somebody who is too strong for him to resist. The fact is — Chrissie did n't want to prejudice you, so she has never mentioned it, except to me — but the boy has not quite broken with his old surroundings yet; did you know it?"



“What do you refer to, Frank?” with a quick, keen glance.

“Well, some weeks ago, when she was down town in the carriage, she saw him having a street fight with a great, hulking scoundrel as big as two of him. ’T was just a glimpse as they drove rapidly by, and before she had time to make up her mind whether to interfere, or not, they were caught in a jam and could n’t move either way for awhile; so she did nothing. Flossie was with her, but did not see Jack, and Chrissie was wise enough not to speak of it before her. Has he ever spoken of the circumstance?”

“No, he has n’t.” The doctor’s mouth set itself in sterner lines. “Is my sister sure about this?”

“Positive. She saw him plainly. I’ve an idea it may be some old pal who has an influence of some kind over him which he has been unable to throw off. I don’t like his not speaking of it.”

The doctor did not answer. They had now swung themselves to the rear of a crowded cable car, and neither tried to carry on the conversation. Instead, Mr. Barmore exchanged political views with an acquaintance at his elbow, while his

brother leaned against the hand rail and stared vacantly at the buildings they were passing.

When he reached his office it was to find Jack busy, as usual, in the surgery. The boy looked up and tried to smile as he said "Good morning!" but there was something really pathetic in his colorless face and reddened eyelids. Evidently he had slept little.

"That 's right, Jack ; when you 've finished here come into my consulting room, will you?" said the gentleman, not seeming to look towards him. Jack answered "Yes, sir," in a tone which lacked all animation.

He came presently, and the doctor glanced up from his engagement book to remark,

"I merely wanted to ask you, Jack, if there is any one in your old life who has a hold upon you of any kind? If there is you should let me know it."

"No, sir," said Jack. "I told you I thought that old man that kept me so long was dead; anyhow, I have n't seen him for years."

"And there is no one else?"

"Not a person, sir."

"Do you ever see any of the old chums now?"

“Hardly ever, sir, except Nate once in a while. Since you got him my beat in this building we sometimes meet in the hall, but that’s all. It’s almost like living in another world, sir.”

For the moment Jack had not even a remembrance of the meeting with Mike, nor indeed, if he had, would he have thought him referred to now; for the idea awakened by these questions was that the doctor wished to know whether his friends were such as he could approve of, and Mike, far from being a friend, was his bitterest enemy. So he answered, as he thought, truthfully, and in perfect good faith.

“That’s all,” said the doctor, “you may go. Only remember! there are some things I should not put up with even in Bert — such, for instance, as deceitfulness, concealment, and low associations. Nothing will so quickly ruin a boy as these.”

He spoke more sternly than Jack had ever heard him, and the boy left his presence feeling that, in some vague way, he had lost the doctor’s confidence also. It added much to the ache in his heart, for he only fully realized how comforting had been his protector’s stand last night, now

that he was apparently left without that protection.

“They ’re all going back on me!” he whispered to himself. “There ’s only Bert left, and like as not I ’ll find him different when I get home. I s’pose Flossie won’t even speak to me, now.”

But he was wrong about both. When he entered the schoolroom at the usual hour Bert looked up brightly, with his old loving smile more pronounced than ever, while Flossie also tossed him a merry nod from the corner where she was busy drawing a map on the black-board. Jack was surprised to see her there, but Bert whispered hastily, as Jack took his seat,

“Her school ’s closed ’count of sickness.”

When lessons were ended Flossie explained further.

“We are n’t going to have school all this week. Two of the girls have come down with typhoid fever, and the health officers have sent us all home, and put a card on the door at Madam Vernon’s. I thought I ’d stop in here, and stay till noon, for mamma was going out this morning, and I knew it would be lonesome at home. Say, Jack, don’t look so glum! I ’ve heard all about it, but some-

thing will turn up to explain it all yet. Have n't you heard of magpies carrying off jewelry, and mice too? I have — at least magpies. Once, one took a gold pin to its nest and they did n't find it for months. If magpies can, why can't mice? I can imagine one lugging that ring off in its teeth, can't you?"

Jack was almost beguiled into a laugh by this. Flossie was so fond of the marvelous, and it was so delightful to feel she trusted him! He tried to recall some such incident, but without success, and even Bert's wider reading failed to furnish one; but Flossie was not at all daunted by this; there were plenty of things the boys had never heard of.

Neither boy felt inclined to dispute her, so she had her own way for once, while Jack grew more like his merry self in her cheerful society, it was such a relief to see her careless way of treating the matter after the doctor's grave, displeased tone of the morning.

## CHAPTER XV.

## AN EVENING WITH THE DOCTOR.

THERE was no change in his manner that night, and, as the days went by, he was always gentle to the boy of whom he was trying to make a man. But Jack sadly missed that something of intimate friendliness and good comradeship he had once enjoyed from his guardian, which not all the extra care and pains that gentleman now lavished upon him could make up for.

July came in with intense heat, and there was much sickness. Flossie's school had not reopened, having been near its closing for the summer's vacation at the time the fever broke out. Besides, Chicago was undergoing one of her periodical scares over the water and the sewerage, so that all of the population who could afford it were fleeing to eastern seashores and western mountains, or, when more modest in purse and ambition, to the pretty lake-resorts of Wisconsin and Northern

Michigan. For Dr. Loveridge, however, there seemed no prospect of leaving while there were such constant demands upon his skill. The Barmores, though, had twice set the time for their flitting, and had been disappointed in getting away, once by Mr. Barmore's business and once by a misunderstanding in regard to the rental of the cottage at Petoskey which they had expected to occupy. While they supposed this arrangement completed they asked the doctor to allow Bert to accompany them.

It was one evening when he had dismounted from Spitfire to join the group in the deep portico, back a little from the street, and quite secluded within its Moorish arches of stonework. He found the Barmore family, with two or three friends who had dropped in, luxuriating in the evening's coolness amid the many cushions and wickerwork chairs which made it a veritable summer parlor. They were all animatedly discussing their prospective outings, and Mrs. Barmore finally turned to her brother with the remark,

"We've decided on Petoskey, Tom, and start next week. You'd better let Bert go with us; there is a great deal of fever about."

“Thank you, Chrissie. But so far as the fever is concerned I do not worry. It is largely confined to the poorer classes, and on these wide, clean avenues, swept by lake and prairie breezes as well as the city brooms, I can't help thinking we are about as safe as anywhere.”

“But the water, Tom.”

“Bother the water! Buy Waukesha, if you're afraid of it; but, for my part, I think the newspapers make too much of that thing. The water is purer than it is in half the villages of the country, where they have surface wells, which are not much better than drains, when all is told. Properly filtered, this lake water is all right.”

“Everything's 'all right' for Tom, if it's only in Chicago!” laughed his sister, turning to her guests. “You never saw a man so loyal to his city. But really, Tom, had n't you better let us take Bert?”

“I'll see what he says,” was the reply, as he rose in response to an impatient whinny from Spitfire, who considered that he was being kept unwarrantably from his comfortable nest at the home stable. “What day do you go?”

“Tuesday, is n't it, Frank?”



“Yes, if I can make it,” answered Mr. Barmore from his cushion; “we ’ll take good care of the youngster, Tom.”

“Yes, but he won’t go one step without Jack — see if he will!”

The interruption came from Flossie, who had been swinging in the hammock that was stretched in the darkest corner, apparently half asleep till now.

There was an embarrassed pause. Nobody answered, either to affirm or deny, and the doctor broke the momentary silence by rather brief adieux, then mounted his restless horse and rode away, his fine, erect figure, in perfect unison with the animal’s well-trained motions, appearing and disappearing with the lights and shadows of the white-paved avenue till it faded in the distance.

When he reached home he found the house quite deserted, except by Dilly, who, with a crony, was gossiping on the grass plat in the back yard. She informed her master that the two boys, chaperoned by James, had gone for a grip ride to the terminus, to see if they could n’t cool off a little; so he sat down, rather forlornly, on his own

doorstep to wait for them. It was perhaps a half-hour later when they appeared, the two young people talking animatedly, while James, taciturn and respectful as ever, followed discreetly in their wake.

Just as they reached the flight of steps where sat the doctor in the shadow—a long, curving flight leading directly to the sidewalk—he overheard Jack say,

“But ’t would be a great lark if nobody ’d find it out, would n’t it?”

He started at the words, and waited for Bert’s answer, which turned out to be a question.

“Yes, but would n’t they?”

“Not for a long time, anyhow,” returned Jack; “you could fool almost anybody with it, I believe.”

Just then they caught sight of the doctor, and Bert broke out,

“Oh, is it you, uncle? We ’ve had a grand old time! I have n’t been so cooled off for a week. We rode on the grip nearly to the terminus, then got off, and I took them to a nice place I know where we had ’most as good ice cream sodas as you can get at Gunther’s; were n’t they, Jack?”

“Boss — that is, very nice.”

“And I’ve been for a ride on Spitfire,” remarked the doctor, making an effort to seem cheerful and perfectly at ease. “Your aunt tells me they are going to Petoskey next Tuesday.”

“Are they? That’s fine! Are n’t you ever going to get off, uncle? It’s sort of poky here now, don’t you think?”

“How would you like to go with them?”

“What, we boys? Would *you* like it, Jack?”

“Am I asked, sir?” questioned the latter, turning anxiously to the doctor.

“I — think not. You and I might follow them later, however.”

“Then of course I won’t go!” There was strong indignation in Bert’s tone. “Aunt Chrissie might ask Jack.”

“You can’t blame her, Bert,” said the other boy sadly. “She don’t think I’m what I ought to be, you see,” and a long sigh accompanied the words.

“It’s mean! That’s what it is!” Bert cried, with increasing anger. “Don’t *you* think it’s mean, uncle?”

The doctor did not answer at once, then he said in a cool voice,

“Your aunt’s actions are not usually mean, Bert,

and, anyhow, that is rather hard talk to use in regard to a lady. Jack, what is it that would be 'a lark, if it was n't found out'?"

The tone of this question was grave, compelling, and Jack, even in the shadow, could feel those keen eyes of the doctor's fixed full upon him. Bert laughed out merrily.

"Tell him, Jack!" he said, greatly enjoying his friend's evident discomfiture, for Jack was squirming with embarrassment.

"Oh, 't was just nonsense," the latter explained with reluctance. "I was only wondering why they could n't have a dummy gripman, and work him somehow by electricity, so that he would jerk the lever when he ought to. Of course I don't know just how, but I thought of it and how 't would fool people, till they found he was n't alive."

Jack laughed in an embarrassed way.

The doctor laughed too, with a hearty, relieved note that somehow did both boys good, it sounded so like old times; and when he exclaimed, "Well! well! what won't you youngsters think of next?" and gave Jack a playful little poke, the boy brimmed over with fun and jollity, and the evening ended in a regular gale of laughter, such as

they had not known since the disappearance of the ring.

But let suspicion once seize upon even a noble nature, and it is as hard to kill as that famous old hydra-headed monster of mythology, who grew two heads for every one that was lopped off. When the doctor went to his room, that night, he said to himself,

“This shall be a lesson to me never again to lie in wait for that poor little fellow, ready to condemn him on any and every pretence! In all our acquaintance, have I not found him as honest and open as the day? Does he not try his best to please me? Is he not, barring a few childish faults bred of long neglect, as fine a lad as I have ever known, besides my own? Has there ever been a thing against him, except the peculiar circumstance of that wretched ring, and what Chrissie saw in the street? I wonder just how much there was in that! Perhaps I ought to have asked him outright, as I did to-night, and the result might be as gratifying; but I hate to seem a spy upon his actions. I believe many a fine nature has been wrecked by too constant espionage, and too little confidence and trust. Still, it may

be nothing but what he would as soon tell me as not. I have half a mind " —

He slipped his feet back into his slippers, hesitated a moment, then crossed the hall in which a gas jet burned dimly, and went through the unclosed door into the gray room. It was in shadow, except for the light through the door, which fell directly on the bed. He stepped to it, and looked down upon the boy lying there. Jack was sleeping soundly, with a broad smile on his homely, attractive young face, the dimples showing plainly.

" I 'd better not waken him," thought the doctor. At that instant Jack, from out of his pleasant dreams, spoke up brightly in his brisk way, " All right, sir! I will, sir!" then tossed one hand up over his head, and dropped into deepest slumber again. The doctor's face grew tender.

" Willing little soul!" he whispered. " He imagines I have asked him to perform some service; that's his exact tone whenever I do. No, why should I question him? Is it not enough that he is as loving and faithful as some fine-bred dog? Do let me be just to him, and true to my own better instincts — they have never failed me yet!"

Straightening the bedcoverings as gently as a mother could have done, this nobleman, who needed no ancestral title to substantiate his claims, went back to his own room and his peaceful slumbers.

But alas! for the worries and frictions which wear upon the imperfect machinery of our temperaments, until they get quite out of gear, and we feel those things we never meant to feel, and do and say those things we never thought we could!

## CHAPTER XVI.

## A VISIT TO THE PAWNBROKER'S.

THE Barmores did not go on Tuesday. A telegram informed them that the cottage at Petoskey was wanted by a former season's lessee, who had received a promise then that he should have the first refusal of it the present summer, and the Barmores were thus thrown out of this plan, also. Despairing of Petoskey, they next tried for accommodations at Mackinac Island, with better success.

But all this negotiating took time, for Mrs. Barmore wished for certain comforts, and would not be satisfied with less. A hotel was too public; a boarding-house she could not abide; and the private families who took boarders in such resorts were simply insufferable! Meanwhile, Flossie was not quite her usual happy self, either. The child had irritable "streaks," as Letty called them, and there were days when she moped about in so stupid and sleepy a manner that she scarcely



answered when spoken to, and in fact tried Mrs. Barmore's temper severely.

Jack, who rarely went to their house now, knew of all this only by hearsay, and, not dreaming what effect it might have upon his destiny, thought little about it. He was too happy, these days, basking in the doctor's renewed favor, to give many anxious thoughts to anything, and worked so well at the office that he was now often trusted with the preparation of the medicines — under the doctor's own eyes, of course. During these busy moments the latter took great pains to teach and explain, and Jack grasped at every bit of knowledge thus imparted with the eagerness of real liking and interest.

He had just left the doctor, one of these mornings, to carry some mixture to a patient, when, as he was hurrying through the hallway, he met Nate, and, as usual, stopped for a word with him.

“Hello, little feller!” he cried, going back to the vernacular out of some vague instinct that it would be kinder to the mite than to overwhelm him with the better language he was rapidly acquiring, “how 's the luck? Biz pretty good nowadays?”

Nate, who looked pale and tired, shook his head.

“I ’m down on my luck awful, Jack!” he said solemnly.

“You be? What ’s the racket?”

“Well, you see, ma, she took sick with fever, and could n’t go out scrubbin’ fer three weeks, and pa ’s been off on a big tear. I did my best, but ’t was no use; we had to pawn something, and Jack — ’t was my fiddle hed to go!”

“O Nate!” Jack’s tone showed that he took in the full effect of this statement, as indeed he did, for he knew all it meant to Nate. The violin was his sole legacy from his grandfather, who had played for years in an obscure orchestra of the city, and who had taught the child, whom he fondly loved, all of music that he knew himself.

Nate’s violin was to him what companions, pleasures, and faithful pets are to other boys. When cold, hungry, and tired after his toilsome day, or when smarting from a drunken father’s abuse, if he could creep into some corner and draw his bow lovingly once or twice across the strings, all griefs were forgotten, and the child experienced the one real happiness of his life.

For Nate to pawn his violin was for him to give up all enjoyment, almost all hope. No wonder the quick tears leaped to his eyes, and overflowed down his grimy cheeks, and no wonder Jack felt a lump growing in his own throat as he listened.

“O Nate!” he cried again, “it’s too bad! I’ll go tell the doctor; I know he’ll help you. Come!”

“O I’m feared o’ him, Jack; he’s so big an’ fine.”

“Well, I’m not, for he’s gooder than he is big—come on!” dragging the reluctant child after him to the office door.

But on opening it he found only Floyd there, who told him the doctor had just left by the rear passage which led to the alley stable, where he kept his horses during business hours.

“How long has he been gone?” asked Jack.

“Went right after you did,” was the answer.

Convinced that there was no hope of catching him then, Jack walked slowly out with Nate.

“What you got to pay on the fiddle to get it out?” he asked thoughtfully.

“Five dollars,” answered the smaller boy, in a despairing tone.

“Why, is that all? I’ve got it then!” cried Jack. “How glad I am I have n’t spent it! I’ll lend it to you, Nate. Here”—excitedly pulling out his pocketbook.

“Oh, can you, Jack? But I’m feared I could n’t never pay it back, nohow, ’less ma’ll help me. Ma, she feels bad, too, about the fiddle, and I know she will ef she can, but if you would n’t mind to wait a bit, Jack—could you?”

“’Course I can. There, take it!” He tried not to remember the straw hat and tennis-shirt he had meant to have in a day or two, and thrusting the money hastily into Nate’s little paw, as if afraid he might be tempted to repent of his generosity, he said, “I don’t need it nothin’ like what you do.”

“You’re a dreadful good kid, Jack! Now if you could only come with me to git it, I’d be so glad! The ‘uncle’ ’s a big, black, queer-lookin’ bloke, and I’m so scared of him! How does I know but he’ll grab the cash, an’ keep the fiddle too? But he would n’t dare try no sech rigs with a swell-lookin’ kid like you be now, Jack.”

Our lad’s laugh at this showed how much he enjoyed the naïve flattery.

“Oh, well, I ’ll go, Nate; ’t won’t take long, and the doctor said they wa’ n’t no special hurry ’bout this medicine. Which way, little ’un?”

“This way, Jack — come on. My! but you ’s the boss kid!” looking up with a great and honest admiration in his tear-washed eyes. “I jest hope you ’ll git to be a gre’t big rich swell like — like Armour, Jack — I does, really.”

“I ’d ruther be like the doctor,” was the quick reply; “though I guess Phil Armour ’s a pretty decent fellar in his way,” he was so kind as to add.

They crossed Clark and Lasalle Streets, slipping in and out through the crowds with the celerity peculiar to the city gamin, and finally came to one of those signs of the three gilt balls which are too well known to many of the thriftless, or unfortunate, poor.

“Here ’t is,” whispered Nate. “Now you bluff him good, Jack, won’t you? And don’t let him git a grip on the cash till I ’ve got the fiddle safe — ’member!”

“Don’t you worry!” was the confident answer.

Nate stood by in delighted admiration as Jack boldly addressed the Hebrew proprietor, receiving such respectful answers in return that the “little

feller" could scarcely keep back his amused giggles.

In less than five minutes the money was paid, and happy Nate held close to his breast his friend and confidant, his hope and comfort, the dingy little old violin, which you, my musical reader, would doubtless have scoffed at as of obscure make and indifferent tone.

When they emerged from the crazy old shop Jack stopped a moment, and looked curiously around.

"Seems to me this looks nateral, though I don't know 's I was ever here before — Why yes, I see now ; it 's where Cuvie lives and this is the shop right opposite her winders ! See ? Them 's 'em up thar, where the red curtains be, Nate."

"Who 's Cuvie, Jack ?"

"A nice little nigger baby what our folks takes an int'rest in. She lives with her Aunt Susie, and she 's a woman that 's pretty well off for poor folks ; she 's got a carpet and two rockin'-chairs."

"Some folks does have 'em, an' they 's boss !" said Nate. "But I 've got my fiddle !" he added, as if that were happiness enough for one poor mortal.

They parted finally on State Street, Nate to run home and show his recovered treasure to his "ma," before hiding it away till nightfall, Jack to hurry southward on his errand, glad in the consciousness of a kind action performed, and an innocent, childish heart made happy.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## MRS. BARMORE ON TRACK OF THE RING.

THAT same morning Mrs. Barmore, intent on getting ready for some social doings, stood impatiently tossing over a drawer full of soiled handkerchiefs and laces.

“Really, Letty,” she said with a frown, “I seem to have nothing fit to wear. Why don’t you look after my things better? It is actually shameful, the state they are in!”

“If you ’ll remember, Mrs. Barmore, I told you, the other day, that they needed doing up, and you said not to bother you then, for you were thinking out a new bonnet.”

Something in the tone of this remark nettled the lady, and she turned quickly upon the girl.

“Letty!” she cried sharply, “you are impudent! Such remarks are uncalled for. These laces must go to Susie’s this morning; do you hear?”



Mrs. Barmore, like most ardent, impulsive women, was at times a bit of a scold. She felt everything keenly; her loves and hates, her prejudices and her enjoyments, were all taken intensely, and her easy, luxurious life fostered all her failings. Yet she was generous to a fault, quick to respond to every charitable call, loyal to her friends, and usually just to her enemies. Withal, she was soon over her tempers, and full of self-condemnation afterwards. Letty knew that every scolding was pretty sure to be followed by a handsome gift, so bore them with great equanimity. She only said now,

“Then, shall I put on my things and take them, ma’am?”

“Yes — but no, you can’t, you see, for you’ve my dress to fix. Wait, I’ll go myself! I’ve an errand at Peacock’s, anyhow. Run and tell Patrick to be around with the coupé in half an hour.”

Letty obeyed, and while Jack was talking to Nate in the hallway, Mrs. Barmore’s carriage was picking its hazardous way amid the maze of railroad tracks and freight houses which must be passed to reach the vicinity of Susie’s humble home. Arrived there, she dispatched Patrick on

an errand to a scrubbing-woman farther down the street, and mounted the stairs but a few minutes before Jack and Nate passed into the pawnbroker's.

At the instant they did so she was standing, talking with Susie about the laces to be laundered, after which she took the chair the mulatto woman eagerly drew forward, seating herself in such a way that, though a trifle back from the window, her gaze swept the street. While thus seated, and engaged in coaxing Cuvie to dance for her, she happened to glance up, and grew instantly intent upon something outside.

Was that—yes, it was *Jack*, coming out of that horrid shop, with a dirty little street musician! Now he was looking up at this very window, his face distinctly visible. Then, like a flash, came the conviction,

“He has pawned my ring!”

She sprang up, then seated herself again. She could do nothing here, but when the carriage came!—

“Susie,” she asked excitedly, “do you know who keeps the pawn shop opposite?”

“Don't know him, missus, praise heaven! He's a Jew, and a bad one too, they tells me. I s'pect

he don't do too square a biz'ness, Mrs. Barmore. But bless the good Lord that takes care of us, I don't need to have no dealin's with sech truck!" and she tossed her head in pious disdain.

Mrs. Barmore stepped to the window and looked down.

"Here 's the carriage! Well, Susie, get them ready by to-morrow afternoon, sure. Good-by, Cuvie!"

"Toss the lady a kiss now, honey — that 's my lamb! Yes, missus, I 'll have 'em ready, ce'tain. Good mornin' 'm,"

Mrs. Barmore hurried out. What should she do? she wondered as she passed down the stairs.

"I do hate to go to Tom, he acts so queer about it all!" she pondered. "I 'll tell Frank. . He 's almost as bad; but surely he will be convinced, now. Drive to Mr. Barmore's office, Patrick," she directed, as she entered the carriage with unusual celerity.

"Yes, ma'am," responded the man, mounting to his box, and thinking, with a chuckle,

"How these rich folks do hate these back streets! Their fine stommicks can't stand 'em, nohow."

When Mrs. Barmore reached her husband's door on Lasalle Street, it was to find that he had just run over to the Board of Trade, and when she then drove to her brother's office it was only to learn of his absence also. Even Jack was not there to be angrily questioned, as she felt he should have been, for, as we know, the little fellow was now whistling happily along his way, attending strictly to the business in hand, which was to deliver a certain mixture to a hypochondriacal old lady, who had to try something new each day for her complication of diseases. Finally, in desperation, Mrs. Barmore was driven to the Board of Trade building, and mounting to the gallery, gazed down upon the floor below.

But if she expected to discover her husband in that seething whirlpool of excited humanity she was mistaken. Some new wheat deal was evidently on hand, and the excitement was intense. As she gazed down from her quiet place above the turmoil, noting the wild gesticulations and hoarse cries, she felt ashamed that men could seem so like a pack of wolves over a dead body.

"Pah!" she muttered, turning away, "it's dishonest grabbing everywhere; only the rich seize

their spoil like the lion, through sheer mastery, while the poor snatch it like the sneaking jackal, by stealth and cunning. How it all sickens one! Take me home, Patrick," she said wearily, her errand to the jeweller's quite forgotten, as she leaned back in the carriage with closed eyes, anger, disgust, and perhaps some nobler emotion, struggling for the mastery in her soul.

She had to wait until night to make her disclosure, and then, though Mr. Barmore seemed quite as much impressed as she could desire, he would take no steps till morning.

"But had n't you better go over and talk to Tom?" inquired the lady, quite willing he should have the honor of "belling the cat."

"No, I had n't!" testily, as he wound his watch with a snap that threatened the mainspring. "The fact is, Chriss, I wish I had swallowed that ring before it ever had a chance to roil us all up so! Tom believes in that boy, and I mean to let him, till there 's something more certain to go on. I 'll tell you what I will do, though," seeing rebellion in her face, and feeling that a compromise would be necessary, "if you 'll go upstairs now, and keep still, I 'll get an officer in the morning

and see what we can make out of the Jew 'uncle ;' after that it will be time enough to harrow up Tom, and annihilate the boy. Now, don't let me hear 'ring' till daylight!"

And Mrs. Barmore wisely concluded that further remarks were useless.

Mr. Barmore kept his word. Engaging an officer from the nearest police precinct, he told his story, and together they visited Isaac Abrams (as the sign read) in his dingy den, Mr. Barmore standing by while the official questioned him.

As he later informed his wife, with bursts of laughter, "It was the best game at cross-purposes I ever witnessed! 'Had some poys been there to bawn a tiaman'-ring? Oh, shentlemens, wass tey there to make chokes on a boor mann so? A tiaman' and dwo poys! No, no, it wass not so. He wass one honest boor mann, and he hat no tiamans —no. Vot dit dose poys pring, then, to bawn? Now, shentlemens, iss it not doo mooch that boor Aprams must all dose poys rememper vot does gome mit deir boor druck to raise a leedle mon-ey, n-ow!' drawling the word out with upraised hands and rolling eyeballs, his whole black, oily countenance distorted into a sanctimonious grin.

Of course," Mr. Barmore continued, "we learned absolutely nothing; but the whole impression left upon us was that of a wicked old sinner, who would do anything for money, and preferred lying to a square meal, and I, for one, came away more convinced that he had the ring than if he had confessed it outright."

"And what did you do next?" inquired his wife, deeply interested.

"Got out a search warrant, of course. They've been ransacking the muck heap all day, the old fellow standing about groaning, protesting and threatening, enough to make one ill! But what good will it do? Of course he has a dozen pals scattered through the city, and he'd have sense enough to pass such a valuable jewel on before it was inquired for. No, your ring is surely gone now, Chrissie, but there's the boy left; you can take it out in crushing him, I suppose!" smiling sardonically.

"How mean and savage you are, Frank! I'm not to blame if the child's a thief."

"Perhaps you are n't — perhaps you are — perhaps we're all to blame somewhat for every thief that lives. But we won't go into social science

now; the question is, what do you want done with Jack?"

"What do you, Frank?"

"Nothing."

"And leave him to grow up with Bert there, and contaminate him and Flossie?"

"Our children must be great weaklings if one false step in a little fellow who has never had any training, can contaminate them. Jack has had a thousand opportunities to steal, if he wished, when he needed money much more than now. If he did take your ring, which I can't help doubting even now, it was through some sudden impulse of covetousness, or because frightened into it by outside influence; but he shows plainly how deep is his punishment in our distrust, and I doubt if any human power could make him do it again."

"Then why does n't he confess, and return the ring?" asked Mrs. Barmore querulously.

"The jewel has probably passed beyond his keeping, and a confession may involve risk to so many that he dare not make it. I declare, I pity the child!"

"The mistake was in Tom's ever taking him; it was an unheard of thing to do! Picking up a



creature from the doorstep, and making him one of us — how could he ? ”

“ Because he is Tom Loveridge, and a man after God’s own heart,” returned her husband with a certain reverence. “ Why can’t you let the matter drop, Chriss ? Is there any use in agitating it longer ? ”

But the lady could not let it drop. The more she thought of it the more she felt it her duty to tell the tale in just the light it appeared to her. Ah, how often that good old word is misused ! It is our “ duty ” to inform upon our neighbor, to close our doors in the face of the unfortunate ; to refuse, in a word, to pay that real “ due ” which Christ has imposed upon us towards all who are poorer and weaker than ourselves. We call that by a holy word which is only an ungenerous, uncharitable impulse of our lower natures.

He who does his duty, as Christ would have him do it, seldom mentions it ; the doing is enough !

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## BERT AND JACK BOTH TAKE LEAVE.

WHEN Jack reached home, after his visit to the pawnbroker's, he found Bert much excited over a letter from a boy friend in Evanston, inviting him to come there and make a visit of a few days.

“It 's Ned Ewing, Jack ; the one I 've told you about. They used to live on Prairie Avenue, till they moved to Evanston, and Ned says it 's 'most like the country there. He has a big yard, and a dog kennel, and a kite as tall as himself that he flies on the common, and a rabbit hutch — what *is* a rabbit hutch, Jack ?”

“Don't know, I'm sure, Bert ; p'raps it 's a game rabbit of some kind, or it might be the place he keeps 'em in.”

“Maybe ; and he 's got one of his goats yet, but the other one died, and he wants me to come right away, because pretty soon they 're all going around the lakes on a trip. If he had only asked you, Jack !”

The other laughed out cheerily.

“Now you need n't worry over that, Bert! You see, I could n't get away now, anyhow, we 're so busy at the office,” with importance; “so you go right along and enjoy yourself.”

“I should n't wonder if uncle would let me, now it 's our vacation. But you're sure you won't mind, Jack?”

“Not a bit of it; you just go and try me. How long shall you stay?”

“Oh, two or three days; it won't be so very long, and I 'll tell you everything I did all the while, Jack.”

“That 'll be nice! And see here, there 's a thing I want to say while I think of it. You must n't always expect that I can do everything you do, Bert, for I can't! I 've got to work for a living; you see, and you have n't.”

“Oh, but I 'm going to. Uncle Tom says a man is n't half a man unless he has some regular employment.”

“Yes, but it 's different; I 've *got* to! There is n't anybody to back me up, only what your uncle does, just because he 's so good.”

“Well, I 'm going to, too, all the same. We 'll

both be doctors, and go into partnership, Jack, only I do hope you 'll do the cutting part. I never could saw off a man's leg, I know — never!" with a slight shiver.

"Not even to save his life?"

"I 'm afraid not. I 'll tell you, I can go around and visit the women who are always thinking they 're sick, and the nice babies that have nettlerash, or something; but when anybody is awful bad with fever, or all smashed up in a railroad accident, I 'll turn him over to you!"

"Well, you may. That 's the work I 'd rather do! I 'd like to feel the man had just one chance in a hundred, and I 'd got to find out exactly what to do to give him that chance; then when I had done it, how glad and proud I 'd be! But I would n't give a cent to doctor folks that were n't only just fussy and nervous."

"Well, but I could do them good, too, Jack. I 'd come into their dark rooms, bright and cheerful, and with some flowers, perhaps, and I 'd say, 'It 's a fine day. I prescribe a ride for you, ma'am!' or I 'd give the baby a jumping jack, and make it forget its rash!"

Both laughed at these pictures.

“I guess we ’ll have to go into partnership, sure,” said Jack. “By the way, I must tell you about poor little Nate” — and he related the incident of the morning.

“That was real good of you, Jack!” cried his admiring mate. “And now, see here, you ’ve got to let me help in that. I ’m going to pay half, and I ’ll give it to you now. I ’ve got over three dollars in my bank, and, if I go to Evanston, uncle will be sure to give me whatever more I need.”

At first Jack demurred, but finally yielded to his friend’s reasoning, and took the money.

“Now don’t you let Nate pay it back either,” said Bert generously, “poor little chap! I ’ll go without my new tennis racket a while longer. The old one will do for some time yet, if I get James to wire it where the handle ’s loose.”

When the doctor was informed of Bert’s invitation he soon agreed to the little trip, for he began to fear there would be no outing for them, as a family, this summer. It was decided that Bert should start on the morning of Thursday — two days later. So, during the same evening on which Mr. Barmore was relating his experiences with the pawnbroker

to his wife, the boys were having a jolly time doing the packing under the doctor's guidance, and with the active connivance (if not assistance) of the two dogs. The latter seemed to think the open valise on the floor was placed there on purpose for them to leap madly in and out of it, much to the detriment of the few articles of clothing already within.

"Now, Tramp!" cried Jack, lashing at the rogue with the paper in which he was about to tie up the overshoes Bert's uncle insisted upon his taking, in case it should rain, "now, Tramp, see how you've mussed that silk blouse. Are n't you ashamed of yourself, sir? Oh! oh! Bert, Nibs has got your best black stockings shaking the life out of 'em."

"How many lives has a stocking, anyway?" questioned the doctor, looking on with silent chuckles of amusement. "As many as a cat? Come, Jack, tell us what you know about them, can't you?"

"Well, they must be *long-lived*," laughed the boy, with a merry glance, "for they're not laid under foot till they've stretched over a good length, you see." He snatched the silken hose from Nibs, letting their lankness hang suspended from his hand.

“Good for Jack!” cried the doctor, clapping his hands delightedly, for he thoroughly enjoyed the boy’s brightness. “I think that ’s worth a quarter,” tossing him a piece of silver.

“But this is a half, sir!” said Jack, as he deftly caught it.

“Well, then,” carelessly, but with a twinkle in his eye, “I suppose it must have been worth even more than I thought! At any rate, never quarrel with a gift, Jack.”

“No, sir; thank you!” tucking it into his pocket, with a grin of gratification.

“I ’m glad you ’ve given it to him, uncle,” began Bert, “for this mōrning — Oh, Tramp! Tramp! Jack, catch the rascal — call him back! He ’s running off with my light trousers, and he ’ll have ’em down in the coal room before we can stop him.”

Both boys started on a dead run after the nuisance, Nibs joining madly in the chase, and by the time the garments were rescued, and the dog properly chastised, Bert, as well as every one else, had quite forgotten the remark he intended to make, in regard to Jack’s goodness to little Nate.

The next morning, while Mrs. Barmore was thoroughly convincing herself as to her duty, the two boys, escorted by James, were on their way to the North-side station, the doctor having requested Jack to accompany his friend so far on his way, and then return to the office to do what he could before noon.

“For,” he added, smilingly, “I think of keeping you busy all day, to-day, so we ’ll go out together for a swell lunch at Kinsley’s. We can’t let Bert have all the treats !”

Jack’s eyes shone. These marks of favor were so delightful to the boy! He was like one basking in the warmth of some cheerful, firelit room after breasting the cold and storm of the night outside, and his soul absorbed the warmth and comfort, with a feeling of perfect rest and satisfaction — poor little Jack!

James left him at Madison Street, and he came, whistling his bravest, to the office door.

“Where ’s the doctor?” he asked of Floyd, as he entered with a dash, boy fashion.

Floyd pointed with his thumb to the consulting room, and went on reading the novel he kept in readiness for such unoccupied moments as these.



It was now nearly twelve o'clock, but there would be time before lunch to label the bottles he had received instructions about, so he made no delay in beginning. He was so intensely busy with his licking and pasting as to be quite absorbed, when he heard the doctor's voice in a tone that made him jump —

“Jack, come here!”

He sprang to obey, entering the consulting room almost with a bound. There stood Mrs. Barmore, with red cheeks and flashing eyes, opposite her brother, whose features were pale and set.

“Jack,” he began at once, “you are charged with having pawned my sister's ring at a low broker's on Fourth Avenue; what have you to say about it?”

“I never did, sir; it's not true!”

“But you were seen coming from there,” put in the lady in an unusually high-pitched voice, “you can't deny *that!*”

“I only went there with Nate” —

“What business had you to go there with him?” interrupted the doctor sternly. “Did n't you know I would object to such a thing?”

“You were n't here, sir, so I could n't tell you.

'T was Nate's fiddle, and he felt so bad! I had the money to get it out, and he was afraid to go alone. I did n't think you 'd care, sir."

"You had the money? That 's a pretty large story, Jack! How could you have money enough to redeem a violin — and how on earth could Nate ever become possessed of such a thing, anyhow? Jack," in a tired, almost desperate tone, "if you will only tell me the truth, I don't care how bad it is, I promise to forgive you. You need not fear, even if some one else has threatened you; I am strong enough to protect you. Don't add lie to lie, but tell me all — everything — and I will be your staunchest, kindest friend!"

Jack gazed into the set face, so at variance with the pleading voice, and a paralyzing sense of despair settled over him. They would not believe him! Then came a thought like a ray of light; he would get Nate to come and show the violin, and explain all.

"You won't listen, no matter what I say," he broke out in a passionate manner, which sounded much like impudence to his listeners. "Will you believe Nate? I 'll bring him, if you 'll let me."

"Well, bring him," responded the doctor in a

harassed tone. "I am breaking all my engagements, but I 'll wait—how long must I wait, Jack? Where does he live?"

As he drew out his watch, with the question, a blank look settled on the boy's face. He had just remembered that Nate's mother had twice moved her few belongings since he had left their vicinity, and he had not the slightest idea where they were located now.

"I — I don't know," he stammered, with a quick, hot flush of annoyance, and something more, for he felt the words condemned him; "he 's moved, and I don't know where to go now, but if you 'll wait —"

The doctor made a gesture full of the impatient resignation of a man who gives up, beaten. Chrissie was certainly right. The boy was full of evasions. All that apparently guileless frankness but showed the perfection of his training in the duplicity of the streets. He had only been deeper than most of them, deeper and shrewder as he certainly was brighter, but he had over-reached himself, as they all do in time. Oh, the pity of it!

An expression almost of disgust settled upon his face. "You need not trouble to explain any

more," he said in a cold voice, turning away. "You may go back to your work now, and I'll see you again, when I have more time. Shall I take you to the carriage, Chrissie?"

"Thank you; I came in the cable, but if you are going my way" —

They passed out together, leaving Jack staring after them with wide, wretched eyes that saw nothing.

"He b'lieves I did it! He b'lieves I did it!" said itself over and over in his brain, like the buzzing of some pestiferous fly.

Then, with a vehemence that surprised himself, came a great surge of anger. He clinched his fists, and shook them, quivering all over with despairing rage.

"They won't b'lieve me 'cause I 'm nobody but Jack. They 'd listen to Bert, and have patience, but they won't to me! They think I can't be honest, 'cause I 'm poor. They 're proud and stuck-up and mean — that 's what they are — and I 'm going to quit 'em this very minute!"

Still shaking with passion, he hurried out through the waiting room, snatching his hat from the rack and jamming it down hard as he ran.

“Shut the door, can’t you?” yelled Floyd after him in a provoked tone, but he did not heed.

Waiting for no elevator, he sprang down the stairs three steps at a time, then out into the hot noon sunshine, turning blindly to the east, and walking straight on without an idea as to direction, or distance.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## AN UNEXPECTED RIDE.

JACK never could recall many details of that day. He remembered reaching the Michigan Central tracks on the lake shore, near the Exposition building, and walking in an aimless way along the ties, or close beside, as opportunity offered, avoiding the almost constant passage of trains by sheer boy luck, apparently. At last he came to a place where the lake washed up almost to the very track, which was there protected by a low, but massive, stone wall.

This he leaped and stretched himself at full length on the white sand, where, with his face buried in his arms, he gave way to his first tears; a shower that eased his brain and softened his heart. He was thinking of Bert now — Bert who had never for one instant doubted him, or made him feel any difference between them, but whose love had been in every sense that of a brother.

“O Bert, you ’ll miss me!” he groaned. “And Tramp — dear! dear! why did n’t I bring Tramp along? And perhaps Flossie too, a little.”

He was silent for a time, thinking it all over; then he broke out again, “Oh, why did it all happen? I don’t see where God is that he does n’t interfere! Seems to me if he is like a Father he should look after me better!” Then, half frightened at these thoughts, he hushed them, and cried mournfully again.

After a while he rose and went on. He was quite out of the city proper, now, and began to feel the pangs of hunger, for the afternoon was well advanced; but there seemed no prospect of food in this desolate spot. He was weary, too, and longed to rest, but, though the breeze from off the great lake stretching away to his left, blew refreshingly cool, yet the downpour of the sun, even at this hour, was almost insupportable, especially as his head already ached from weeping.

He rose and staggered on, and after walking some distance came to a switch yard where were several empty freight cars, waiting on the various tracks. Longing for rest and shade he gave a glad exclamation when he found the door of one slightly

open, and it did not take long for him to clamber inside.

It was evidently a fruit car, from the peculiar odor. It was empty now; though — oh joy! — here was quite a little heap of peaches which had been carelessly overturned from some basket and left to dust and decay. Thanks to the unripe condition in which most fruit is packed, there were several not too far gone to be eaten, and he at once made a meal which removed at least the worst gnawings of his hunger. He next noticed a pile of excelsior, such as is used for packing, in one corner, and rolling up his coat and soft hat for a pillow, he stretched himself out at full length, wriggled around a little to find a softer spot on his thin mattress, and in less than three minutes was as sound asleep as he had ever been in the gray room at home.

When he awoke it was with a feeling of absolute bewilderment. What was this rattling, swaying, bumping sensation about him? Was an earthquake shaking the house down? The house — oh! no, he remembered now, he had no house to shelter him, no home to call his own! Then he realized what had happened. The car he had en-



tered for his siesta had been coupled to a train which was running away with him in the darkness!

He sat up, feeling so sore and stiff that it was hard to move, and peered about him. It was quite dark, except for a streak of grayish light which entered through the doorway at the side, still partly open. Where was he going to? Away out into the country somewhere — for, to his idea, all outside of busy Chicago was alike “the country” — and what would become of him there? How would he get food to eat and clothes to wear? I must confess these were the only thoughts that troubled him then. No regret over the fact that he was cheating a great corporation out of a half-fare ticket even entered his head! If we are only guilty of conscious sins, then Jack was not guilty of this one. There was nobody to remind him either — nothing but the bumpity-bump of the almost empty car as it was hurtled along over the rails, and an occasional snort from the engine somewhere in advance, as it tore, monster-like, through the summer night. Surely it was a lonesome situation for our boy.

But there was no help for it now. He crept to

the door, and gazed out. It was a soft, starry night, with no moon, but with that peculiar mellow light filtered through the shadows, which seems to belong especially to midsummer nights.

The train evidently made few stops, for it sped on and on with its regular bump and rattle, rattle and bump, growing into something like a song in Jack's brain. He crawled back to his bed again, for the breeze through the door was almost too fresh, sighed, stretched himself, and thinking he would not sleep again till daylight, was off into dreamland before the long, serpent-like train had dragged its entire length over the culvert just ahead.

When he woke once more he was almost as surprised as before.

Now everything was intensely still; no rattling nor bumping, no snorting, in fact nothing but a dead calm. But the dawn had come, and its light filled the car. He rose hurriedly, approached the door and jumped out. What a long train it was! He began to count the cars, but had to give it up, they trailed so far away on either side of him.

“Where that white cloud is must be the en-

gine," he said. "Perhaps they 're watering it." Then he looked around him.

"I guess those buildings looming up t' other side are freight-houses, and this nicer one, a ways ahead, with a little green park at the side, must be the station."

He decided to go and ask the man in charge where he was. So, kicking out his half-paralyzed legs once or twice to get up the circulation again, and brushing off the clinging bits of excelsior, he walked boldly towards the building. As he neared it he discovered some of the train men standing at the open window of the office, engaged in conversation with some one inside.

"Good morning!" he said cheerily, marching straight up to the group. "Can you tell me what town this is?"

There was a sudden cessation of the talk as they faced around upon him.

"Well, of all the cheek!" cried one. "You've been stealing a ride, you rascal!"

"No sir ee!" was the quick answer. "You folks have been kidnapping me. What business had you to run off with me when I just stepped

into your old car for a nap out of the hot sun, I 'd like to know? I tell you this road owes me a fare back to Chicago, and I mean to sue it, if it don't pay me!"

All this with a broad grin and the frank, merry glance which made Jack's manner so engaging.

There was a shout of laughter, even the conductor, who had made the accusation, rather reluctantly joining in.

"If you 'll keep out of the cars we 'll let you alone, don't you worry!" he growled, trying to repress his smiles. "You look too smart for a tramp; have you run away from home?"

"I have n't got any home. I've run away from—charity," said Jack, his tone growing bitter. "I can take care of myself, and I 'm going to. If there's anybody lives here it won't take me long to earn enough to get back to the city again, but I'll see to it pretty sharp where I take my next nap, I tell you! What is this place, anyhow?"

"You're in Michigan now," answered another of the group, civilly enough, "and this town is named Kalamazoo."

"Queer name, that! Sounds like some ani-

mal, or other, don't it?" muttered Jack. "Is it much of a town?"

"Oh, considerable. What's your trade, anyhow, youngster?"

"I have two. I'm a bootblack and a doctor."

Another shout.

"And which do you propose to carry on here?" asked the conductor.

"Probably bootblackening, till I get well onto my feet again. Can you direct me to some place where I can get a breakfast, sir?"

"They might take you in at the Insane Asylum," laughed one, "if you could make yourself out a first-class doctor's certificate that you are a little off in the head; or you could find accommodations at the jail."

"See here," said Jack, "I have n't had anything solid in my stomach since yesterday morning, and I can't stop to chaff on air. Tell me where there's a restaurant, or bakery, can't you? I've got money to pay, and I'm about starved."

The station master directed him, the others calling after his retreating form,

"When you going to bring that suit against

the corporation, eh?" One recommended that he apply for the position of surgeon of the road, instead.

He merely waved his hand good-naturedly, and hurried on, the conductor remarking to the station-master, before he returned to his train,

"Better keep that kid in mind, Bill. Somebody 'll be inquiring for him yet; he 's no common tramp!"

Jack lavishly spent fifty cents of the scant three dollars in change, which was all he possessed in the world, and having eaten his fill he strolled out, attracted by the sound of martial music near by. A company of state militia was coming down the street in column of fours, dressed in blue uniforms, with knapsacks and gray blankets strapped to their shoulders. Jack, having nothing else to do, and feeling much more cheerful since his hearty breakfast, fell into line with the straggling men and boys behind, and keeping step to the music, marched gayly along, head up, feeling free as air.

"Got any barracks, or forts around here?" he asked of one of these boys.

"Forts? No; them 's our Light Guards going

to encampment. "Wish 't I was going along too!" replied a red-haired youngster, who seemed inclined to be sociable. "I'd go too, quick, as a bootblack, if my folks 'ud let me!"

Jack gave him a sudden, intent look. Here was an idea. He remembered that some of the "perfesh" at home had gone out with the Chicago National Guard more than once, and given glowing accounts, afterwards, of the harvest of fun and "shekels" they had reaped. He would follow these Kalamazoo Guards — beyond that, no matter.

There were shops on either side, and in one he soon procured a kit, which greatly diminished his little pile. As he slung it over his shoulder he felt as if he had changed back into the old Jack once more. He need not worry, now, over his language or manners. He was Jack, the bootblack, rollicking, happy-go-lucky Jack, who only needed the old rags and dirt to be quite himself again!

Reaching the station, the company broke ranks and gathered in groups to await the train. One of the men soon broke out with that soldier's favorite "Marching through Georgia," which was soon

caught up by the others, and given with a vim. Jack joined in the rollicking chorus, till the last of the heaviness seemed lifted from his heart. What had such as he to do with high life, anyhow? As he again piped up,

“ Hurrah! hurrah! we ’ll sing the jubilee;  
Hurrah! hurrah! for the flag that sets you free,”

it seemed for the moment that he had dropped the few past months from out his life and even from his memory, and would never care to recall them; so potent upon the heart of a boy are the combined influences of a soft summer morning, a company of soldiers, and a brass band!



## CHAPTER XX.

### WITH THE MILITIA AT MACKINAC.

IT was a novel day for Jack. The special train was crowded with the various companies of militia, taken up all along the road, who were riotous with songs, jokes, and laughter. Money was free; "rations," as every man of them now called his daily food, were freer; and, sad to say, tobacco and whisky were freest of all.

The men felt they were off on a spree, not half of them realizing the real, hard work which lay before them, and the daily pay seemed to most an extra bonus thrown in with this midsummer picnic, generously given by the state to her brave defenders—an idea which one day and night of guard duty would, in most cases, quickly dissipate!

Jack, with the rest of the bootblacks, shared in much of this jollity and good-fellowship, if not in the more substantial favors of the men.

Once, late in the long day which they passed on the road, he was asked by one of them,

“Well, kid, where do you think you are going to, anyhow?”

“Don’t know, and don’t care,” was the brisk reply. “I ’m following the flag wherever it leads!” and the men gave him “hip-hip-hurrah!” on the spot.

Jack soon caught up the company cry of “Kal-amazoo-mazip-mazan!” and, indeed, so identified himself with this special guard that they might even have chosen him for their mascot, but that they already had one! His eyes were also open for what was to be seen outside, and grew big at the sight of the acres and acres of charred forest stumps they passed through when they reached the northern part of the state.

“My! but that ’s a big waste,” he confided to another boy of the “perfesh,” who rejoiced in the name of Pete, and who had made friends with Jack at once. “Why, I know sights of folks that never has coal or wood enough to keep warm with, and look at that!”

He pointed to a patch, even now smoldering, which stretched away, far as the eye could

see — a vast acreage of naked and blackened timber.

“Does seem too bad, don’t it?” returned Pete. “But it ’s jolly fun to see it burn — when you ’re in a safe place, of course. My pa goes lumbering up north, sometimes, and once I went up with him; and then I saw the biggest thing yet. They ’d cleared a place pretty near a mile square, I guess, and piled the brush heaps up higher ’n a house, and one night they set twenty acres of ’em afire. Well! you just ought to ’a’ seen it. I ’d thought ’t was the judgment day, sure, if I had n’t knowed better. And, to top all, there come up a big thunderstorm, and what with the lightning, and the crashes of thunder, and the steam, and the awful hissing of the rain into those hot fires, I tell you I just fairly shook, I was that scared! You see,” he added apologetically, “I was only a small kid, then.”

Jack listened with great interest, and asked innumerable questions about everything he saw, which, by the way, is a rather good method of going to school, at times. When told that they were *en route* for Mackinac Island he started a little, remembering that this was the name of the

place to which the Barmores were going, and almost wished he had not joined the militia; but it was too late to retreat now, and he felt sure he could avoid them, even if they should arrive while he was there, which was not at all certain.

When the companies finally disembarked at Mackinac City, on the mainland, and stretched their cramped legs on the long pier, waiting for the steamer which was to transport them across the straits, he gazed about him with intense delight. Far away on either hand stretched highways of deep blue water, teeming with busy craft making for the various points on the shore, which reached out long arms into the waves here and there, as if to facilitate the work of commerce, while above all bent the paler blue of the widest sky he had ever seen, now flecked with fleecy clouds.

After the hot day in the crowded coaches the short steamer ride over the dancing waves to the Island was like a bit of Paradise to tired Jack. When they drew nearer, and he saw the quaint old village hugging the water's edge, the white bastions and odd, old-fashioned turrets of the Fort on the higher ground in the rear; then took in the vastness of the Grand Plank

Hotel, conspicuously crowning its bluff farther to the west, and noted with soldierly pride the city of white tents made ready for the encampment, spreading over the fields and crowding up into the woods between, all lighted by the fires of such a sunset as he had never even dreamed of, he joined freely in the gay hurrahs of the men, and wondered if this earth could show a braver sight, anywhere!

The march uphill through the sand was tiresome, but when the men broke ranks in their company street, between the double row of white A tents, all fatigue was forgotten, as Jack, with the other boys, ran here and there.

They noted the regularity of each street, with its row of line-officers' tents across the end, the largest one in the center, marked by a broad fly, or awning, and the tall flagstaff directly in front, being the captain's, and the smaller ones being for the lieutenants, quartermaster, etc., in a descending scale on either side. The cooks' shanties were at the other end, with a gay pavilion close by for the dining room, all wearing that air of precision and order almost impossible to obtain, except where law is promptly enforced, authority absolute, and rank an acknowledged fact.

“Where ’ll we sleep?” asked Jack at last, noting that the privates were preparing to bunk in lots of from four to six in each tent, and thinking the prospect small for the boys.

“Oh, we most gin’rally kin git in with the ’ostlers over to the stables, or we hides under the tables in the dining tents, or bunks in the guard houses when we finds one empty. They ’s places enough, but they say the nights are cold up here, and I ’m thinkin’ if we kin only git into a cook shanty some ’ers, we ’ll be jest fixed !” remarked Pete.

“But can we?” asked Jack.

“Oh, I guess so — by workin’ it sly.”

Jack did not ask how this might be accomplished. He privately resolved to strike up a fair bargain with some good-natured cook at once, by which he should secure a night’s lodging and daily rations for certain services, such as making fires, preparing vegetables, and so on. This plan he carried out successfully too, much to his comfort, for the nights proved to be quite as chilly as represented.

His most pressing wants thus attended to, he started out with a large ham sandwich in his

hand, his kit on his shoulder, and peace in his heart, to see what there was to be seen before dark. Pete accompanied him, and made a good guide, as he had attended encampments before, and knew what he was talking about. He pointed out the various headquarters of the colonels, like those of the captains, only larger and more imposing, and with higher flag-staffs. Here, too, were hitching posts, for, as Pete hastened to remark, these were the field officers, who rode horses, while the captains only walked.

Off at some distance Jack noticed a still finer, larger line of tents, each one backed by two or more, like the successive rooms of a house. These sported even wider flies in front, and a flagstaff like the mast of a ship, while two grim cannon stood like gateposts in advance of all.

Here a guard was already posted, though military law was not to be strictly enforced till reveille next morning. There seemed to be a great deal going on. Smart looking officers were inspecting their horses as they were led up by the grooms, or, with their wives, were directing the servants who assisted to unload the vans full of baggage

and furniture constantly arriving. There were children running about, too, and bedroom suites, folding chairs, and tables — yes, even rocking-chairs! — were piled up promiscuously, waiting to be arranged within the roomy tents.

“That don’t look much like roughing it, does it?” remarked Pete. “This is brigade headquarters, where the gen’ral of all our reg’ments and his staff is bunked, and some ’ers over in them trees is the guv’nor’s headquarters.”

“The guv’nor’s?” cried Jack, much impressed.

“Yes. Ye see, the guv’nor ’s same as commander in chief, and he hes a staff, too, and they ’re all gen’rals, and colonels, and big swells like that. My! you should see the airs them officers puts on, with their pined hats with long feathers, and their gold lace, and ep’lets, and yaller sashes — there! that ’s the place, sure.”

He pointed to a group of tents much like those at brigade quarters, except that the governor’s was perhaps a trifle larger than any yet seen, while two short flagstaffs, instead of one tall one, marked its central location. There was also a longer stretch of auxiliary tents here, but not half the life and bustle, while the absence of the



two cannon gave it far less of a military air. Here there was no guard, as yet, and the officers in their quiet undress uniforms, sitting about with their families, seemed to be already settled and quite at home.

As the boys watched from a little distance, an orderly came and lit the two jack lights out in front, which flared high and threw queer lights and shadows upon the novel scene. Presently some lady, with a sweet voice, started the song "In the gloaming," in which she was soon joined by a full chorus of good voices. The sad, sweet notes went to Jack's heart, and a feeling of homesickness settled over him, deep as the shadows of the lonely night.

"Guess I 'll turn in," he announced shortly, and hurried away to seek his bunk in the heap of straw thrown out from the crockery barrels in one corner of the cook shanty.

The lingering warmth from the supper fire felt grateful, for even midsummer nights are chill in these northern regions, and burying his tired little body to the ears, he had it out with himself. Finally he fell asleep, his last word being a moaning cry of "Bert, O Bert!"

The next thing he heard was a sound that brought him to his feet with a bound — the sunrise gun! He was not outside soon enough to see every flag in the encampment fly to the head of its staff, and unfurl to the morning breeze with the leap of old Sol above the horizon, but the burst of band music that followed brought him out-of-doors in quickstep time.

For a while he could do nothing but stand in delighted wonder watching the scene, and would only leave it by hurried snatches to attend to his "chores," as he called the tasks set him by the cook, for the whole atmosphere was gay with martial music which seemed to start the breezes into play, even as it started the blood to a swifter flow. All down the various company streets he could see the men, half clothed, come tumbling out of their tents to perform their ablutions, and most of their dressing, in the open air, and so splash water and fling jokes with a liveliness quite unquenched by the uncomfortable quarters in which most had spent the night; for at camp one can sleep soundly on anything, provided he can keep warm, and always wakes good-natured!

"Hello! Goin' to guard-mount?" cried Pete,

swinging into view with a soldierly stride, shoulders erect and thumbs at his pants' seams.

"Of course!" was the alert answer. "Where is it?" Jack meant to take in everything, now he was here.

They followed the little squad of men who were marching away to duty under a sergeant's charge, and soon stood with delighted eyes watching the evolutions of the men, as they went through their tactics, received instructions, and marched away, still in squads, to various parts of the field; many of them to learn for the first time how heavy a gun may become when carried two hours at a stretch, and how hot the sun pours down on a head protected only by a fatigue cap, and to wonder how many miles they may have marched in that monotonous tramp back and forth over a few yards of hummocky ground.

"I don't b'lieve I 'd like that," mused Jack, watching a fresh-faced youth begin his beat with a brisk stride, scarcely waiting to re-shoulder his gun at the turn, only to gradually slow down to a drawling pace, with a decided wait, and tremendous yawns, at the change, "there's too much

sameness in it for me! Where 'd we better go now to get bizness, d 'ye think?"

"Well, I allers strikes right out fur the big-bugs," returned worldly-wise Pete in a confidential tone. "Ef you kin git in with them they pays well. That is, the aides and the new officers does, but the old gen'rals, and such, don't pan out any great! You see they 're here fur biz exclusive, and they don't care so much fur the toggery part, and lets their boots git pretty bad. But even they fixes up review days and such."

So the boys took in all the headquarters, even condescending, in time, to line officers and privates, making quite a paying morning of it before the bugle call to rations brought them back to their own mess. Here, behind the cook shanty, they managed to make a somewhat snatchy meal, which Jack, at least, honestly paid for afterwards by helping to clear the long tables, before sallying forth once more.

He soon learned that there was an encampment of "regulars," as the United States troops are called, from Fort Wayne at Detroit, over in the woods to the rear of the governor's quarters, and, with Pete, decided to pay them a visit, also.

The two found them in the trimmest of round tents with board floors, from which the canvas was now rolled up neatly, to let in the fresh air and sunshine. There were no cook houses, but for each mess a ground fireplace, made by hollowing out the earth into a small oblong pit, into which, when filled with glowing coals, their bake kettles were set.

The bacon and beans which came from these smelled good, and if there was less variety of "grub" there seemed, at least, quite as much neatness in preparing it as in the lavish company messes of the State troops.

"Say," observed Pete, after they had taken it all in, "did you know, there's a short cut across these woods to the Fort? Let's go over there, and I should n't wonder ef 't would be as good a place as any to watch mornin' parade; it's up so high, ye see."

## CHAPTER XXI.

## FLOSSIE'S ILLNESS.

WHEN the doctor left his sister, after putting her into a Wabash Avenue cable car, he hurried away to keep his appointments, with the worried feeling that he must try to recapture the two hours he had lost. Instead of lunching at Kinsley's he would have gone on, quite forgetful of food, had he not been reminded by a friend and patient, who knew his ways, and who laughingly declared that he was doubtless half famished, and insisted upon his stopping long enough to swallow a cup of coffee and an oyster paté. It was clinic day at a certain hospital, and he succeeded in reaching there only ten minutes late, to become immediately absorbed and oblivious, for the next three hours.

When, at length, in the late afternoon, he threw himself into his coupé with the order, "Home!" he closed his eyes in utter weariness

of mind and body, but, as usual, his first thought, outside of business, was for the boys.

He would not find Bert's dear face awaiting him at dinner, to-night, while Jack — his brow contracted again at thought of Jack.

"But I must be patient," he reasoned with himself, "and very kind. Harshness will not improve him." He sighed deeply over the boy's supposed unworthiness.

He had barely alighted before the home door when James met him, with an unusually perturbed manner.

"Dr. Loveridge," he said, hurriedly, "they've been after you three times from Mrs. Barmore's. Miss Florence is very sick."

"Flossie? Drive there at once, Charles."

He sprang into the carriage once more, calling back as he was whirled away, "Don't keep dinner for me; shall stay there to-night."

He found real trouble awaiting him. His brother-in-law grasped his hand warmly.

"I thought you'd never get here, Tom! Come upstairs at once. When Chriss got home this morning, she found poor little Flossie in a raging fever, and we've done everything. When I

learned you were over on the North Side I called in Merrifield. He pronounces it malarial fever."

"Indeed!" The doctor's voice was quiet, though sympathetic, but he had already laid aside hat and gloves and was starting up the broad staircase, Mr. Barmore, pale and subdued, following close at his heels.

The doctor found his sister, somewhat to his surprise, perfectly quiet and composed. Real emergencies deepen and strengthen many natures, which seem ready to fly into chaos over small, or fancied, trials. Flossie was indeed extremely ill, and the doctor's face, as he bent over his sweet little favorite, was tender with pity for her sufferings. But the uncle in him did not swamp the physician. In ten minutes each understood his work for the night, while in less time than that the child's fever had been slightly subdued under the promptly-applied remedies. Then he turned to Mrs. Barmore, and laid a hand kindly on her shoulder.

"We have done all we can for the present, dear, and I am growing shaky from lack of food; have you had dinner?"

"No, they are waiting for us now. Go down



with Frank, please. I'll follow later. I could n't eat now, anyhow!"

He saw that she meant it, and went without a remonstrance; then, fortified by a delicious meal, took her place and peremptorily ordered her to do likewise.

"And eat both well and slowly," he said; "you'll be twice the nurse if you take your food in a complete and regular manner."

She obeyed as well as she could, while he moved quietly about preparing for an all-night's vigil. It proved a long and terrible one for poor Flossie, racked with pains and burning with fever, but perhaps almost as terrible for those who, loving her so well, were obliged to watch her agony, so powerless against the might and malignancy of her disease!

The doctor looked ashy-hued as he came out into the early summer sunshine, and hastened homewards for a bath, and an hour or two of rest. Flossie was, possibly, a trifle more comfortable, but who could tell what might happen in even that hour of time? Only, they were to let him know on the instant, should any change occur.

Faithful James opened the door to him with

a solicitous look, and a "good morning" that was as near a caress as the punctilious creature had probably ever allowed himself.

"Good morning, James! My little niece is no worse, we hope, though very ill. Before Jack goes to the office I'd like to see him, but I must first take my bath."

"But, sir, he is n't here!"

"Is n't here? Why, where is he?"

"I supposed you had him stay at the office, sir. He was n't here all day, yesterday. I did n't tell you last evening, because I thought you knew, sir, and" —

"But, James, I can't understand! Did n't he come home *at all*?"

"No, sir."

The doctor stared helplessly at the man. The absorbing events since yesterday morning's three-sided interview made it already seem misty and unreal, and at first he could not imagine any cause for the boy's absence. But after a moment his weary brain began to grasp the situation. Jack had stayed away purposely, unable to face the certain knowledge of his crime; had he *run* away?

For one instant, so unstrung was the good man, there seemed cause for congratulation in the thought; that worry was over with, at least; the next he rallied his better self to meet this new complication as he should.

"Telephone at once to my janitor," he said, and "ask him if Jack is at the office. Come to the swimming bath and let me know the answer."

"Yes, sir," replied the ready James.

The doctor hurried up the stairs. He was still enjoying the restfulness of his plunge when the man's voice sounded through the closed door.

"Jack is n't there, sir. The janitor says he has n't been seen at the office since yesterday noon."

"Then he has run away!" was the bather's swift mental comment.

"Very well; that is all now, James."

"Shall I let him go?" he mused. Then a thought of Bert shamed him. "No, even if I do not bring him here again, I must look after the lad. He has a soul to save, and having assumed the responsibility of helping to save it, I can't shirk it because I have run against a snag. No; Jack must be found, and made a man of, yet!"

This meant more work before he could rest. He dispatched James for a certain official he knew, ate a hurried breakfast, and lay down to catch a bit of a nap before he should arrive.

It was indeed but a morsel of a rest, and the interview which followed was a long one. That ended, he hurried back for another look at Flossie, before going to the office. He found her no worse, at least, and leaving careful directions for her care until noon, was driven to his work.

As he left the elevator on his office floor he nearly stumbled over a mite who had stopped, for one happy moment, to try the rolling powers of a new alley during a lull in his business. The doctor righted himself, then stopped with a sudden, "Hello, Nate!"

"Hello—how de do, sir!" springing to his feet, and trying to grab up his marbles and doff his cap at the same time, which experiment naturally resulted in his sending the marbles flying in every direction, while the cap simply hung rakishly over one ear. "Shine, sir?"

"Not this morning, Nate. But I 've a question to ask you; where is Jack?"

"Jack, sir? I don't know, sir!" and the sur-

prise in his face was plainly genuine. "Ain't he in the office, sir? I hain't seed him sence two or three days ago, sir, when he" —

"When he what, Nate? Go on."

"When he got me my fiddle, sir."

"Got you a fiddle — how?"

The doctor's eyes seemed to bore through the child, and he squirmed, as if not enjoying the process.

"Out o' pawn, sir. I did n't hev the cash, an' he did. Jack 's allers good when he 's got anythin' to be good with, sir."

"Come to think of it, you may give me a shine after all, Nate. Pick up your marbles, and come on."

During the boot-polishing that followed the doctor pumped Nate so shrewdly and successfully that, by the time the job was finished, the former knew all he cared to about that whole transaction; and with this knowledge came a great revulsion of feeling for the boy who seemed destined to keep him in constant commotion. Jack had not been making excuses about that pawn shop, but telling the simple, unvarnished truth. If he had, indeed, run away, might

it not be through the extreme provocation of being repeatedly and wrongfully accused, rather than because of any fear or shame?

In Nate's naïve and honest admiration for his friend, the doctor read Jack's heart anew, and said to himself more firmly than he had ever said it before, "My instincts have been truer than my judgment here. Jack is an honest boy!"

But he felt sincerely thankful that he had not waited for this conviction before resolving to do his best for the child. Jack should be found, if money and the finest of detective talent amounted to anything!

Giving the astonished Nate a quarter, he said, "Well, as soon as you see Jack, let me know, will you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And say this to him wherever you run across him: 'The doctor is anxious to tell you how pleased he is with that visit to the pawn shop.' Can you remember that?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. Now, don't forget! Do these at once, and I'll make it worth your while."

“I will, sir!” and Nate departed with shining eyes, expecting to run across his old chum within a few hours, without fail.

But Nate was disappointed, and both money and talent seemed powerless to find the truant.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE RING IS FOUND.

A LETTER from Bert to his uncle, enclosing one to "my friend Jack," showed how little he knew of the latter's absence. The doctor answered it by telling of Flossie's illness, but he left Jack's story untouched, hoping for news of him before Bert should return. He knew that his nephew would expect no more letters during so short a stay, and did not wish to sadden the little visit by the thought that Jack had left, when he might find him at home, safe and well, upon his return.

Flossie was alarmingly ill for five days, then began slowly to mend. As soon as Mrs. Bar-more could take breath from her racking anxiety, she began studying over the cause for her illness.

"I know, Tom," she said, one morning, when both had been delightedly watching the child as she took her gruel with something of a relish, "I know it is the sewerage, and it must be attended to at once."



“Just as well to have it looked to,” was the somewhat oblivious answer. “Now, try this bit of soft toast, dear — that ’s my lady! Why, you ’ll be eating us out of house and home next, you starving robin!”

Flossie gave a weak little laugh, and her uncle having watched another bit go down with as pleased an expression as if he had dropped a nickel in a slot, and expected something wonderful in return, turned to her mother.

“I should n’t wonder if we could get her off next week, Chrissie, she ’s such a smart child!” patting the delicate little hand, which was almost as white as the counterpane on which it rested.

“Oh, Tom, if we only can! *Do* you think so? And will you go, too? I would n’t dare take her away from your care.”

Mrs. Barmore turned soft, loving eyes from one to the other. This illness of her little daughter’s had changed her in some lovely, indefinable way. One cannot go about with the soul uplifted in agonizing prayer to the Father, and with every selfish instinct wholly swallowed up in loving care for another, without being changed and softened. In Mrs. Barmore’s case the world-

liness had simply dropped off, and with it a certain fussy hardness, which overlaid her gentler, truer womanhood. She looked sweeter in her easy wrapper, with her hair tucked up into a careless knot, and that love-light in her eyes, than she had ever looked in her latest Parisian costumes, if not so splendid. All about her rejoiced in the subtle change, as one rejoices in the warm sunshine after a three days' northeaster.

When Bert returned he was almost beside himself with grief to find his friend gone. His uncle felt constrained to tell him the whole story, and was surprised at the strong indignation of the usually gentle boy.

“It was too bad! Oh, it was too bad, Uncle Tom!” he cried, his voice trembling and his eyes suffused. “I knew all about the pawn shop. Jack told me that night before I went away, and I began to tell you, when Tramp ran off with my trousers. Jack was never the one to go bragging about when he did a kind thing — never! But he was just as good and generous as he could be, yet it seems as if you and Aunt Chrissie” —

He checked his hot words, arrested by the look

in his uncle's face, then went on more gently, "No, not you, uncle! You were good to him. But she just kept at him all the time. Anybody would get mad if they were treated so!"

"Bert," said the doctor, drawing the boy towards him, "I 'm afraid Jack has suffered from injustice, but surely you are not going to let it turn your heart against your only relatives? Aunt Chrissie may have been suspicious and prejudiced, I too quick to mistrust the boy, but neither of us would be willfully unkind. Just now, too, your aunt's feelings are peculiarly tender, for we have all been afraid of losing our dear Flossie. Promise me you will say nothing about this to her at present, anyhow, and will not even let it influence your manner to her in any way. She certainly loves *you*, Bert, and has always been kindness itself to my boy."

Bert was still for a moment, then he turned and leaned his head against the doctor's arm — a little caress which had been his since babyhood — and said softly,

"I could do anything for you, Uncle Tom! Yes, I promise — but, oh! uncle, I never had a brother, and I loved Jack so!"

“I know, Bert, I know. But, my dear son, we will find him yet, and when we do, I promise you this — he shall be your brother, indeed.”

“Oh, uncle, do you mean — *what* do you mean?” looking up with a flushed and eager face.

“I mean that, if you wish, I will adopt Jack as I have adopted you. You shall share equally in everything; in my love, my plans, my home, and my property.”

He was watching the lad keenly, but if he expected any reluctance to this proposition he was entirely undeceived.

Bert caught his hand, and looked anxiously in his face for a second, as if probing his very heart, and then gave a glad cry. “You mean it, Uncle Tom, you mean it! I see you do. Oh, how glad, how glad I am! Dear, dear uncle, is n’t there anything more we can do to find him quick? To think I have a real brother at last!”

I think the doctor had never loved his boy quite so well as at that minute. But he was always a man of few words, so he only drew him a little closer, as he thought, “He is Margaret’s own boy!”

A few days later Floyd met his employer, as he entered the office, in the afternoon with the words,

“Mrs. Barmore is in the consulting room, sir, and wishes to see you at once.”

“Mrs. Barmore?” repeated the doctor, in an anxious tone, and without a second’s delay entered the inner apartment, to find his sister there, her face pale, and her manner full of agitation and impatience.

“Is Flossie worse?” he asked quickly.

“No — oh no, it is n’t that. Oh, Tom, it’s the strangest thing! I — I don’t know how to tell you — see there!”

She flashed one bare, white hand before his eyes; on its third finger glittered the lost ring.

“You have found it? The pawnbroker — was Nate’s story a — ”

“No, no, it was n’t any pawnbroker! Oh, Tom, you will blame me so, but the worst you can say will never be as bitter as my own self-reproaches are.”

“For pity’s sake, Chrissie, explain yourself.”

“Don’t look at me so, then! You know, I told you we were to have the plumbers examine our

drainage all through the house. Well, yesterday they began, and this afternoon they got to the tower-room lavatory. Letty was with Flossie, and I was resting on the couch when the man at work there gave a sudden exclamation, and a minute afterwards he came out, and said excitedly,

“ ‘Mrs. Barmore, here ’s a queer thing! Would you mind coming to see it, ma’am?’ ”

“I went at once. It seems he had found a leak in the waste-pipe, so had removed a part of it, and there, Tom, wedged into that pipe, about an inch below the bowl, was this ring! It all came over me in an instant. I had taken it off that day, as I thought, and laid it on the marble slab; then, when I turned away, the lace of my loose sleeve must have swept it into the bowl, where it was carried down by the escaping water, lodging just out of sight; and there it has lain ever since, fitting into the pipe as if made for the place. Oh, Tom! Tom! to think of all the trouble it has caused. Poor little Jack! I don’t see why such things should be.”

“Poor little Jack, indeed! Perhaps to teach us true charity, Chrissie. Heaven knows we needed the lesson!”

“I know you think I was hard, Tom, but, after all, how could one help suspecting him, under the circumstances? The true solution of the mystery would never have entered our heads.”

“Chrissie, if the boy left in your boudoir, that afternoon, had been Bert, and all had occurred as it did, would you have suspected him?”

“No, certainly not.”

“So I thought. Bert is our own, brought up in ease and luxury, and kept clean and pure because we remove every temptation from his path, and only encourage his best qualities. But poor little Jack was nobody’s child but God’s, and the soil of the street was still upon him. To be sure, I had tested him as Bert has never been tried in all his life, and he had stood the test with real nobility; to be sure we all knew that, through months of intimate companionship. We had never found a soul-stain upon him, whatever his body might show — yet, at the first unexplainable, suspicious circumstance we at once pounced upon him as the guilty one. Oh, Chrissie, it shames me! it shames me! It is the plague-spot in our patrician natures — this ingrained distrust of the very poor. And, until washed out by Christ’s

blood, it will be a bar to heaven itself. ‘How hardly shall the rich man enter therein.’ I tell you, Chrissie, it is not Christ-like! In all his life, what was our Saviour’s teaching? That men are brothers. We say it often; He *lived* it. He was born one of them, mingled with them, trusted them, *loved* them. We stand aloof and throw them a bone, then hurry to slam our doors shut, lest they snatch another. Oh, Jack! Jack! my poor little lad! May God forgive us, if you can not!”

The doctor had spoken rapidly, with an intensity that awed his sister. Bursting into tears, she ran to him and clasped his arm.

“Tom,” she sobbed, “you are the noblest man I ever knew! Don’t blame yourself—I am the only one in fault. It was my carelessness, my blind self-sufficiency, my wicked ‘Stand aside, I am holier than thou!’ feeling that has done it all. Forgive me, Tom, and perhaps God will, too. You make me *feel* Christ; you make me want to be really like him! I, too, have some good impulses, brother, only they get so buried under all this worldliness. But my repentance is sincere now, at least. I have my own money, and you



shall takè whatever you need to aid in finding Jack. We 'll put the whole Pinkerton force at work, and they must find him! God has given me back my Flossie; if he will give us Jack, also, I will make up to the poor child for all my cruelty. I will love him as my own; I will be to him the mother he has never known! Say you forgive me, dear Tom, and I shall have hope of forgiveness from above."

"My dearest sister, I do forgive you freely!" kissing her with exceeding tenderness, "but it is harder to forgive myself. God helping us, we will find the boy, and teach him by example what love, and trust, and charity really mean—for until now it is he who has been teaching us, I 'm thinking!"

Mrs. Barmore never did anything half-heartedly. She made haste to let every member of both households understand how sincere was her sorrow for the wrong she had done Jack; and her servants, as they listened to her frank confession, and watched her beautiful face, all aglow with noble feeling, felt a new affection stirring their pulses.

As the fat cook confided to Letty, "Wall, I will say this fur Mis' Barmore. She ken be as

sot and fussy-partik'ler as they make 'em, but when she do come down off her high horse they ain't no nonsense about it. She makes me think o' that gal with the curl on her forehead,

' When she 's good she 's very good indeed,  
But when she 's bad, she 's horrid! '

Nowadays, though, she 's so good she 'most scares me."

A few days later they started for Mackinac Island, for, though they all disliked to leave the city with Jack still undiscovered, the doctor felt that he could do little personally, towards finding him, and if the detectives succeeded in their constant efforts, spurred on by the large rewards offered, a telegram would bring him home in a few hours. Besides, Bert was looking pale and peaked, and for both his sake and Flossie's he felt they must hasten to fresher air, and cooler, more restful nights.

Flossie was now beginning to go about the house a little, though still far too weak and languid to suit her fond guardians, who could but hope that the delightful steamer trip up broad Lake Michigan, and the quiet of a cottage at

beautiful Mackinac would put new life and spirit into them all.

“If Jack could only be along!” moaned his little friend, gazing eagerly from the carriage window, as they were driven to the slip. “Oh, if I should see him on the sidewalk, now, this minute, uncle, would n’t it be fine? We’d pick him right up and take him along, would n’t we? And he could wear my clothes till you had telegraphed for some more. Oh dear! oh dear! how can I have a real good time without Jack?”

His face, which had begun to glow and flush with his imaginings, faded out again as he sank back in a weary way, and his uncle sighed to see how real this trouble was, and how it wore upon the lad in every way.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## JACK AT THE FORT.

JACK had been nearly two weeks on the island, for this year the encampment was of unusual duration, and he was growing so used to military life he had almost forgotten there was any other. In spite of the homesickness and sore sense of injury which often made his heart ache, he could not be quite unhappy in the midst of such stirring, music-inspired scenes. Each hour saw something new in the way of drill, or parade; hosts of people were going and coming; carriages full of gay parties were always trying to pass the outer guards; soldiers off duty were engaged in games and blanket-tossing; aides galloped madly about, truck wagons labored to and fro, band concerts under flaring torch-lights enlivened the evening air, and belated privates, lingering too long in the village saloons, attempted to run the guard, generally succeeding after a challenge and a race, but

sometimes landing ignominiously in the guard-house.

A brisk hour or two of work at boot-polishing in the morning, which brought in all the change he needed, since board and lodgings were free, was followed by rambles, swims, sails, and fishing excursions, or by long, lazy hours stretched on the grassy plain, to watch the fascinating evolutions of the soldiery. He was delighted with the Fort. He and Pete struck up an acquaintance with an old soldier, engaged just then in carrying water from the tank to the laundry, and, lending him a helping hand for a moment, were rewarded by his taking them all through the enclosure.

Pete privately confided his belief that it "was no great shakes of a fort, onyhow," which remark the old fellow overheard and felt somewhat nettled; but when the boys wormed from him a confession that, though he had been twenty years in the service he had never taken part in but one "Injun fight," both of them were almost indignant!

"Wall," the soldier explained, shifting his quid of tobacco to his left cheek, "you see, it 's this way. There 's lots o' scares out on the plains — lots on 'em, but that 's 'bout all they amount to. There 'll

be the call to boots and saddles, and a great hustlin' and marchin' away, but when you gets to the spot, the Injuns ain't thar! That 's the worst o' them redskins; they won't meet you half way. They jest skulks, and circles, and yells, and runs away agen, and you can't git into a real downright good fight with 'em, nohow. I 've marched out arter 'em time and time agen, but I hed to march back without sightin' much more 'n their pony tracks. Injuns is slipp'ry cusses. Come in here and set down, won't you? It 's sort of a purty place to look out, and I often come here to smoke my pipe. Here 's a ca'tridge-box to set on ef you like, or mebbe you 'd ruther jest hang your legs out the door."

The boys thought they would, and Jack gave a cry of pleasure as he took his rather dizzy place. They were in one of the queer old white-washed guard shelters, built of logs, on the wall, which from the bay look more imposing than they really are, and seated in the doorway, opening to the floor, their feet hung over a sheer precipice formed of the natural rock and the masonry wall, many feet in depth.

To their left, at a little distance, was a sally-

port, and a long flight of steps leading to the lower ground, where nestled the quaint old village almost at their feet. Beyond was the ever-present sheen of blue water lively with sails and steamers, lumber-loggers and rafts ; while a huge " whaleback," as the modern iron-clad freight ships are called, lingered at the wharf, and one or two " wana-gans," the floating homes of the lumber-men, slid lazily by.

" My ! but it 's pretty ! " said Jack, after a long look, while he thumped his bare heels contentedly against the defensive wall beneath him. " Did you ever have any fights with Injuns, here ? "

" No, never sence I come. They used to, you know, and once there was an invasion of the Britishers, when they captured this very fort fur a while, but they hed to give it up agen. Ever been over to whar they landed ? "

The boys shook their heads.

" It 's a lonesome sort o' place, the beach thar, and you go over through them woods to the rear, whar our target range is. It looks peaceable enough now, and not much to see but land and water, but on the way is a cave whar some of our men hid, and 'bout whar the fightin' was the big-

gest is the purtiest field o' daisies you ever set eyes on!"

"We 've been to the top of Sugar-loaf Rock, and down into the Devil's Kitchen," remarked Pete, who never lost a chance to tell of his own exploits.

"I 'll bet you hev! Would n't be boys if you was n't allers climbing!" chuckled the old man. "Been to Arch Rock?"

"No, but we 're going to-morrow," said Jack. "Some of our mess is goin' to have their pictures took up there, and Pete and I mean to be on hand."

The soldier chuckled again. "Get your phiz in free, hey? Wall, that 's all right; guess 't won't crack the camera ef you stand well back. D'ye chew?"

"No, thank you," said Jack, promptly, and Pete, after a moment's indecision, also declined the proffered quid.

"S'pose you 'll be on hand fur the sham battle?" asked their guide next.

"You bet!" answered Pete, with more emphasis than elegance. "They say it 's goin' to be a big thing; the militia 's goin' to take the fort, ain't they?"



“H’m! I don’t think much of battles what’s all planned out peaceable beforehand,” observed the old man contemptuously. “One comp’ny of our reg’lars could whip all them feather-bed soldiers down thar, so they would n’t know what kilt ’em!” and he flipped a supercilious thumb towards the encampment-ground of the State troops. “What do they know about sojerin’?” he went on, but Jack broke in —

“Some of the oldest ones knows a heap, I tell you. I was blacking one of our colonel’s boots up to brigade quarters, t’ other day, when an officer from your fort come along and dropped down in a camp chair for a visit. They got to talkin’ about fightin’ and so on, and, come to find out, our colonel had been through the whole of the civil war, and was in fifty battles and twice a prisoner, while your fine reg’lar owned up he ’d never been in even one decent scrimmage in his life!”

“Oh, yes, them G.A.R. men, of course,” allowed the blue-coat reluctantly. “I s’pose they hev seed some service — but they never fit Injuns, anyhow!”

“Nor you either!” retorted Jack, but with a laugh that softened the words. “Guess you fel-

lers had n't better be throwin' many stones at our men."

"Oh, wall, wall, they 're well enough, I s'pose," assented the other, with much condescension. "Fact is, sojers is n't much in peace times, anyhow. Sometimes I think I 'd ruther drive a milk-waggin — but when you 're in fur it what 's the use o' grumblin'?"

"Sure enough!" said Jack. "There 's troubles in every life," and he sighed as if he spoke from sad experience.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE SHAM BATTLE.

THE sham battle came off as planned, and, thanks to the boys' new friend, Jack and Pete secured what they complacently named "front seats for the show." That is, they were perched airily on the tank roof at the fort, which overlooked the whole battleground. The sloping sides offered them a fine lounging position, with the slight inconvenience of being obliged to dig their bare heels against the shingles rather too desperately for real comfort, in order to keep their places. But who would complain of a little thing like that, especially as they could end the torture at any moment by sliding to the ground, and taking up a new position somewhere else between earth and sky?

They watched with interest the orderly marching of the State troops to their various concealed positions in woods, or behind fences, then the gay

rush of the uniformed officers on their prancing steeds, to their higher, safer stand quite out of range. These were followed closely by carriages filled with excited ladies, who intended to keep well behind the officers, and who were half scared and wholly curious, while from every direction streamed the spectators, seeking out trees, house-roofs, and every ridge of land, and constantly being warned off the real battlefield by vigilant skirmish guards. It was a novel sight in those country solitudes, and stirred the boys' blood as they watched it.

The day was typical of Mackinac, clear and bracing, hot in the sun, cool in the shade. The crystal atmosphere brought everything into close range, like a good field glass, and the earth seemed wider, the sky higher, and the waters bluer than anywhere else! In spite of all the gay movement, the dash and color, spread out like a living picture before them, just here it was as still as in a pine wood, save for the soft drip, drip, of the water inside the tank, and the twitter of two restless swallows flitting about from wall to roof, evidently engaged in a little family squabble of their own, unmindful of the greater battle soon to begin.

Once in a while a certain faint, far-away clatter, continued regularly for some minutes, told that the officers were examining the long lines of men, to be sure no ball cartridges were mischievously concealed in any rifle, or belt; and once a rumbling sound, like very distant thunder, called their attention to the planting of a battery on a ridge, in order to protect the besieging infantry, as they scaled the walls of the fort.

Then there was the echo of a cheer, and way off across the intervening plain they saw the ambulance corps dashing to position, led by its red and white banners, and followed by the stretcher bearers on the double-quick.

“Jiminy! It looks like real war, don’t it?” burst out Pete, his eyes big and round. “Makes me feel sorter creepy to see that. S’pose them things ’ll be needed?”

“Not unless some of the fellers get a sun-stroke, or a charge of powder in their faces, or unless — say, ’t would be a bad job if anybody should get shot with a ball ca’tridge by mistake, would n’t it, Pete?”

“Well, I should say. Look, look, Jack! See

'em! See 'em! They 're creepin' up through them woods — I kin see the sun on their bayonets — whoopy! look-a-here!"

He had raised himself, and Jack did likewise at this explosion, while both gave a yell of delight to see the commotion just below them in the fort. There was stillness no longer. The sleeping garrison had awakened to duty! The quick, sharp orders of the officers rang on the air, the gunners sprang to their pieces, the soldiery formed in orderly lines or concealed themselves in the bastions and behind the parapets. All was quick motion, and disciplined grouping. The fort was ready to repel the invader.

There was a flash in the boys' eyes as a line of infantry made a dash across the open field to take up a position nearer the ascent. Boom! rang the first gun from the walls, and boom! rang back again from the battery on the ridge, while the advancing lines below sprang to shelter, dropping behind boulders and bushes, as close as possible to the foot of the steep, rocky escarp.

The boys yelled again, nearly sliding off the roof in their excitement, while Jack shrieked above the din, "Look! look!" as from three sides

came a grand rush of troops converging towards the fort. Now the guns boomed madly, and the air grew sulphurous about them; for they found that gunpowder smells just as badly, and raises quite as great a smudge, as when the ball makes it deadly.

And now the battle grew momentarily more lively. They could see the skirmishers darting from tree to rock on the plain below, and noted the signals flying from the far-away post of the superior officers, while lesser ones rode wildly about the field, risking their lives in a heroic manner!

The sharpshooters in the fort now began picking off those who ventured out of cover, and now and then a man dropped out of the ranks, to be quickly swooped down upon by the stretcher bearers, and borne off to the ambulance wagons in a haphazard way which must have been terribly painful to a wounded man.

“Are they really hurt?” cried Jack in distress.

But Pete laughed and answered, “Not a bit of it! It’s all sham. These same fellers ’ll be out here fightin’ agin, fust you know.”

Now came the first sally up the hill, only to be

repulsed with great slaughter by the doughty garrison, who cheered wildly as they saw the enemy fall back before their rapid fire, in spite of the desperate efforts of the officers to rally and reform them. One coward troop retreated in confusion half way across the field, and were only re-formed under the revolvers of their officers, when they returned to their work, laughing so hard that they could scarcely stand!

So it went on. A feint in the rear of the fort, where a few trained veterans had managed to evade the vigilance of the garrison, and make a dash from the woods on its least protected side, drew the momentary attention of the defenders—a fact of which the besiegers quickly took advantage.

Mustering in force as rapidly and silently as possible they crept and climbed from stone to stone; then, with one brave deafening yell, they rose to their feet, made an impetuous, upward rush in spite of a desperate hand-to-hand encounter there, and slid, tumbled, or were flung over the wall, laughing and shouting in helpless triumph, to be immediately joined by the garrison—for the fort was taken, and the sham battle over.



“It’s done!” cried Jack. “’Rah for the militia! ’Rah for the old Second!” He slid to the ground, Pete following suit at once.

As they went by the officers’ cottages they could see the piazzas packed with ladies, while invaders and invaded joked together over the glasses of iced sherbet and lemonade which they were thirstily drinking; for the commandant, being a strict temperance man, offered nothing stronger to these intruding guests.

“That is n’t much like war!” remarked Jack as they went on; “but it’s lots better. I don’t see, for my part, why folks can’t stay peaceable and never have any fighting. Of course war makes a big show, but it costs lots, and when you’re done, what of it? There’s a lot of men killed, and a lot of property destroyed, and half the time they can’t either side tell just what first begun it.”

So spoke our young philosopher, and the world is learning slowly to agree with him, in theory if not always in practice.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## AN HONEST TALK.

“Do you like it, Bert?”

The voice came from the hammock stretched across one end of the cottage piazza, and was Flossie's own, though a little weak yet from her illness.

“Yes, indeed! Is n't it still, though? And how queer it seems to live in such a pretty house right in the middle of a wood! I've just been for a walk, and it was fine. I followed that little path that turns and goes around the house. Sometimes I would come to an open space, where there was a cottage, or two, but mostly it was like being in a forest; till finally I turned a corner, and there was the Grand Plank right before me, with its great piazzas full of people laughing, walking, and talking, and carriages driving up, and some musicians playing, as gay as could be. You don't know how funny it made me feel!”

“I should think so. I wish I could get out too, but I s’pose I ’ll have to wait a little.”

“Yes; but you ’ll soon grow strong here, Flossie. When I came back I took another path which led me close to the shore, only ’t was high up, and all below was rock and trees, so you could just get glimpses of the water now and then. Well, finally I came to a flight of wooden steps leading down there. I thought I ’d try ’em, so I scrambled down, down, (they were awfully rickety things!) and zigzagged around, till I got to the big rocks and bushes below. Then I saw a path, and I followed it till it led me close to the edge of the water, and round a ledge of rocks, into a cave.”

“A cave?” cried Flossie.

“Yes, all hollowed out as nice as could be, and back in a corner was a regular fireplace, where there had been a fire; and up at one side the rock stuck out just like a little shelf, and” —

“Now, Bert, is this a made-up story to amuse me, or is it” —

“The Devil’s Kitchen!” growled a deep voice which made them both jump.

“Oh, uncle, how you scared me!” breathed Flossie, as the doctor emerged from the front

door. "But was n't that 'most swearing that you said?"

"What, the Devil's Kitchen? Are n't you ashamed to insinuate such a thing against your old uncle? Why, I was simply giving you the name of the cave Bert was describing."

"Is that really and truly, Uncle Tom?"

"To be sure!"

"And did — did — *who* was it made the fire there?"

He laughed merrily. "I hope nobody worse than a party of boys, or half-breeds, my dear child. I don't believe the bad creature it is named for ever cooked a meal there in his life!"

"I think it's a horrid name, uncle!"

"So do I, Flossie."

"But I would like to see the cave."

"I'll warrant you would, little Miss Curiosity. Well, we'll go there some day, if you'll be real good, and grow strong as fast as you ought to. I've a plan. Suppose we have a carriage, this afternoon, and visit the fort, and the encampment grounds, and the village, and perhaps Arch Rock, if there is time. Would you like that?" patting the little hand that grasped the hammock's edge.

“Like it! Oh, thank you, Uncle Tom! You always do think of the nicest things. But tell me, do you s’pose anybody was hurt in the battle, yesterday?”

Their steamer had brought them into port while the smoke of the carnage still hung over the island, and all had watched the scene from her decks almost as excitedly as if the battle had been real, while Flossie actually grew nervous to exhaustion over her fear of some calamity. It did not seem possible to her that there could be so much noise and apparent fighting without some harm.

Her uncle laughed teasingly. “I really believe you will be disappointed if I say no, you blood-thirsty child! Why, you were bound to have a list of killed and wounded as long as your arm.”

“It was so awfully real!” she sighed, lying back contentedly on her pillows.

Her uncle drew forward a cane rocker, and his glance fell upon Bert. The boy stood leaning against a pillar, his profile towards them. Something in its delicate outlines, and the far-away gaze of his eyes, made the gentleman ask hastily,

“You feel perfectly well this morning, Bert? You like it here?”

“Oh, yes, uncle — yes to both. It ’s wonderfully pretty! I was only thinking — there was n’t any news this morning?” turning with a wistful look.

“I have n’t been to the office yet, my boy,” his solicitous eyes resting on his nephew’s face.

Bert came nearer, and leaned against him. “I can’t be right happy, you know, when Jack may be — starving!”

“Oh, no, no, Bert!” The doctor slipped his arm about the lad. “Never think that! Jack is too strong, too capable to suffer. He ’ll take care of himself, never fear! And I ’ve no doubt we ’ll find him soon.”

“But we ’re so far from him, uncle!”

Even as he spoke the words, his lips quivering with emotion, two boys were scuttling along in their bare feet over the path behind the cottage, taking a short cut to the British Landing; and these two boys were Pete and Jack. So closely do our life paths often cross, and many times without our ever suspecting it.

The doctor answered quickly, “The telegraph makes no account of distances, Bert. Come, we will go to the office together if you wish; would you like to?”

Bert assented eagerly, and the two were soon off, leaving Flossie to lie at ease in her swinging couch, while Mrs. Barmore, inside, helped Letty unpack the trunks, and arrange the few pictures and trinkets they had brought to make the furnished rooms more homelike. It was as still as possible, for the cottage was set down in the midst of a grove, with no other dwellings within sight or sound. Flossie, swinging herself gently, watched a little red squirrel take a leaping ramble through the great oak before her, evidently quite unmindful of his human neighbor.

By and by her mother came out, and looked gently down upon her, with the questions,

“Are you all right, dear? Do you want anything?”

“Nothing at all, mamma; I ’m as comf’y as can be!”

“And where is Bert?”

“Gone with Uncle Tom, to see if there ’s any news from Jack. Mamma, how pretty you look this morning.”

“Why, thank you, Flossie!”

“Yes, you do. Your cheeks are so nice and red — but it is n’t just that. You ’re so sweet

lately, mamma, and your voice is so kind! Sometimes, when you speak to me, it makes me want to cry, almost."

"My dear child, what a fanciful little thing you are."

"But there *is* a difference, mamma," the little girl persisted. "Letty sees it, too. Yesterday, when she put your wrap around you on the steamer, she acted as if she wanted to hug you; and when she buttoned your boots, the other day, she gave your foot the lovinest little pat in a sly way, but I saw her—and I don't believe you 've given her a present for a good while, either."

"That 's true. I 've been quite neglectful, I declare! When we are out we 'll buy her one of those pretty Indian baskets they sell in the village, to keep her sewing things in, won't we, Flossie?"

The lady was walking slowly back and forth, the crisp ruffles of her white cambric morning-gown billowing behind her, and Flossie, now raised upon one elbow, watched her critically.

"But, mamma, I don't believe she 's missed the presents," she continued musingly; "for you know" — She hesitated, and with a little laugh her mother took up the sentence.



“I know they usually went with a scolding — is that what you meant to say, Flossie?”

“Oh, no, not quite that, mamma! I s’pose she deserved the scoldings; but then the presents would make her think of them, would n’t they?”

“Doubtless. And as I have n’t scolded her lately, I naturally forgot the presents. In fact” — her tone dropping from its light inflection into seriousness — “she has not seemed to need reprimands lately, now I think of it. Perhaps I was more to blame than she, Flossie.”

“Oh, mamma, it ’s awful nice for you to say so. There are n’t many big women would own up to their little girls.”

“Perhaps it would be better if they did, sometimes. ‘Open confession is good for the soul.’ Flossie, darling, we never get so old but that we have faults to conquer; but the more we learn to overcome them in youth the easier it will be as we advance in age. I ’m afraid I had my way almost too much as a little girl, and so I find it harder now to keep from being selfish and thoughtless. When I deny you things in future you ’ll know it ’s to save you suffering by and by, won’t you, dearest?”

“Yes, I ’ll understand, mamma; when I ’m naughty you shall talk as hard as you like and I won’t mind; and if I give you a little look, or a wee pinch sometimes, you ’ll know it’s just to make you remember, and you won’t mind, either?”

“Not a bit, dear,” stopping to give her a fond, laughing look, at which Flossie’s arms flew up, and the two clasped each other in a loving embrace, drawn closer together than ever before by the honesty of a real soul talk.

By and by the doctor and Bert returned, the later with a springy step and bright eyes.

“News! news!” he cried as he reached the steps. “Tell ’em please, Uncle Tom.”

“I ’m afraid Bert makes too much of it,” said his uncle; “but I hope not. It seems, a boy answering to Jack’s description left Chicago the day after he disappeared, with a circus troupe, the Biddle Brothers. They went West, and we hope soon to track them and find our boy. But I tell Bert he must be prepared for a disappointment, these fancied resemblances are so often illusions. Besides, I don’t believe Jack would leave the city. He was too used to its streets and ways. He would dread the loneliness beyond.”

“But you ’ve inquired everywhere he used to be,” urged Bert.

“Yes, I know. That much is in our favor now, for I confess I can not see how he could have escaped the vigilance of our Pinkerton men, even in that great city. Yet people have kept thus hidden for months, and even years.”

“Oh, I hope it is Jack!” cried Flossie, clasping her hands. “But what would he do in a circus? Would he black their boots?”

All had to smile at this practical question, but no one had an answer ready, and the call to the noon meal interrupted the talk and conjecture, for a time, at least.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## IN A STEREOSCOPIC VIEW.

THEIR ride was much gayer for Bert's new hopefulness, and all enjoyed every moment of it. The day was fair and still. A sleepy haze veiled the brilliancy of the watery horizon, and gave the outlying vessels a dreamy, picture-like look, as if drawn in with a light touch.

Every yard of the way had its charm. First, there was the lonely wooded track winding in and out between the oaks and pines, which led them to the broad, lively road past the hotel and encampment ground. Here all was alive with movement and color, for every one was watching the departing troops, as they were marched away to the wharf, company after company. Then came the low, sandy street between the queer, old-time buildings which mark the ancient village, where half-breeds in buckskins, Canucks in blouses and coon-skin caps, soldiers in uniform, and tourists in camping cos-

tumes jostled each other in a friendly way, as they went and came, constantly forming new and gay groupings, like the shifting colors of a kaleidoscope.

The doctor pointed out the old trading-posts, the Mission House, with its deep columned veranda and low-ceiled rooms showing black beams above, and the Astor House, where they still display with pride the old books and relics of the trading-post in which John Jacob Astor laid the foundation of his colossal fortune; also the poor little hut said to have been the home of "Anne," Miss Woolson's charming heroine. Then they drove up the steep road past the Fort, which gleamed white midst the haze, and on over the level hardness of the track leading to Arch Rock, on the further shore.

As they approached this, Flossie broke into new exclamations of pleasure. The arch, almost perfect in shape, is spanned by a natural narrow bridge of rock. Upon this were groups of people, both civilians and soldiers, climbing and gazing, while through the open arch beneath could be seen a number of pleasure boats floating about over the still water, which stretched away, an unbroken sheet, to the horizon.

They stopped the carriage, and the doctor and Bert alighted to try the climb, leaving the ladies to watch them from their easy seats in the open barouche. A photographer had set up his booth at one side of the mass of rock, and was driving a thriving trade, taking and selling views.

“Look, mamma!” cried Flossie, as she waved her hand in response to a flutter of handkerchiefs from the center of the arched bridge, “there they are at the very top of the curve. How nice Bert looks in his yachting suit!”

“And Tom, too; he ’s a finely-formed man. How he looms up against that pale amethyst background of sky! Now they ’re coming back.”

They soon reached the carriage step, where the doctor stopped to ask, “Would you like some views of the rock, Chriss? They have them on sale here.”

“Oh, yes, mamma; do let ’s have some for the stereoscope, won’t you please?” put in Flossie.

The doctor went back at once for the views, Bert meanwhile cutting himself a cane from an alder bush, before retaking his seat in the carriage.

“Here we are, then!” cried the doctor, as he

reappeared, with a long, thick envelope in his hand. He tossed it into Flossie's lap, with the words, "I tried to get a variety, so you would be sure to be suited."

As they drove on Flossie handed Bert a part of the views, while she looked those over which she had retained.

"They 're very pretty, uncle," she began, when a cry from Bert interrupted her.

His eyes were fastened on the photograph he held, and his face was quite colorless.

"Why, Bert!" she began, but he broke out, unheeding,

"Uncle, it 's Jack! It 's *Jack!*"

"Jack? Where? What? Are you crazy, child?"

"No, here, here, in the picture, on the rock! See, off to one side of those soldiers. One of those two boys is Jack!"

The doctor caught the outstretched card from his hand, and gazed at it.

"I declare, it does resemble him, but it 's so small —" scanning it narrowly — "tell me what you think, Chrissie."

She took it from him, Flossie waiting, all impatience, to grasp it.

“There is a look — if we had a glass we could tell instantly, but in these stereoscopic views the figures are so tiny, till brought out by the lens, that I can’t be certain” —

“*Do* let me have it, mamma!”

Flossie gave one intent look, and cried, “It is! it is! I know it. It’s Jack, sure! Oh, do let’s go home quick, and see.”

“Yes, Aunt Chrissie, please!” begged Bert, all in a tremble. “We can tell at once with the glass. Would n’t it be too wonderful?”

The horses were quickly headed for home, and Bert, scarcely waiting for the carriage to stop, sprang out and ran in for the stereoscope; one of those common, old-fashioned affairs so often seen. Reappearing immediately, he adjusted the photograph between the wire supports, and raised it; but even as his eyes touched the leather shield he suddenly dropped his hand.

“You look, uncle,” he said hoarsely, “I—I could n’t stand it to be disappointed now!”

The doctor took it from him, and bent a silent gaze upon the view, all standing about in breathless attitudes, watching him. Then he handed it to his boy, while a happy light broke over his face.



“Look, Bert! You need not be afraid. Look for yourself!”

Bert clasped the handle, and bent his head, which began to whirl at what he saw. There was the rock, standing out vivid as life, with several men in uniform upon the arch, while a little to the side and rear were two barefoot boys. One was Jack—Jack, the bootblack now, for his dress was shabby and rough, while over one shoulder was slung the kit. But the frank, honest gaze, the snub nose, the dimples, the indescribable, individual look which we call expression, were all there, and they were unmistakably Jack's!

Flossie caught the glass from his weak hands as, utterly unstrung, he turned with the sobbing cry, “Oh, uncle!” and buried his face against that broad and loving breast.

Then Flossie, after a quick glance, gave a funny, weak little whoop, and began to dance about, while Mrs. Barmore also snatched the glass, to cry,

“It is! it is! There can't be a doubt of it. He is here with the soldiers. How strange to think of it!”

“Of all the rackets! What's so strange and

wonderful?" cried a big voice, and Flossie was caught up in her father's arms.

"Oh, papa, when did you come?" she managed to ask between his kisses.

"By the boat, this afternoon, only to find an empty nest and my birdies flown. You see," turning to his wife, "I got here sooner than I expected, for Palen has come back from New York, and finding only Letty to welcome me, I concluded I'd have a nap on your improvised divan in there — But what's up? You're as excited as a cageful of monkeys at feeding time."

"We've found Jack! He's in here!" cried Flossie, sliding from his arms, and catching up the glass, which her surprised mother had dropped into a chair.

"In here? In where? What's that old stereoscope got to do with Jack?"

"Just look and see, papa; just look and see!" She danced up and down, waving the thing in his face.

"Well, well, don't put my eyes out, child! Here, let me clutch it!" Then, after an intent look — "Well, I swear — no, I don't either — but it's the kid, and no mistake! If that is n't a

queer thing! That he should be on this island, and we turning all Chicago wrong side out to find him. Tom, let 's have dinner, or supper, or whatever you call it up here, and go over to the encampment ground directly after. He seems to be in company with these militia men."

But the doctor felt a tug at his coat-flap, and heard the whisper,

"Don't wait for supper, Uncle Tom; please don't!"

"Never mind our supper, Frank," answered the good man, "Bert's and mine. Of course you 're hungry after your journey, but we will go first to the ground, for we can't wait, can we, my boy? Besides, they 're breaking up there to-day, and we don't want to be too late."

"That 's right, Tom, go at once," put in his sister, nervously. "We 'll keep supper for you, and" —

"And you must bring Jack to help us eat it! Oh! do, do go quick!" cried Flossie, as she pushed him almost roughly down the steps.

## XXVII.

## FOUND!

ON the morning after the sham battle Jack awoke with a sinking feeling at his heart. The gunpowder exploit of yesterday had been the wind-up of this military picnic, and to-day would end it all. For the last time he had watched for the sound of the sunset gun, and the sudden fall of every flag from its staff; for the last time he had attended evening dress parade, with the grand march of the regimental bands around the field to their own stirring strains, while the troops stood at "parade rest," still as a pictured line upon the grassy plain, waiting for that beautiful ceremony, the field-officers' salute, as the latter rode abreast, a long, flashing row of horsemen, in all their bravery of gold lace, clanking swords, and high plumed hats, to raise white-gloved hands in greeting to their general, as he awaited them, erect and still as a statue upon his coal-black horse, a little in

advance of his splendid staff officers. For the last time he had heard the stirring reveille, and trotted through the dewy grass to guard mount. For the last time, too, he had run the guard, and the woe-begone look on his face grew merry as he thought of it.

Of course there was no way for two poor little bootblacks to get hold of the password, which only the officers should know; so when they were belated at the village they must take their chances of a challenge. A night or two ago he and Pete had crept through the outer fence rails into the field, and were sneaking along, still as shadows, when a rifle clicked appallingly near, and the cry rang out,

“Who comes there?”

“Oh, rats!” cried a laughing voice, which Bert would have recognized at once, and there was a swift rustle through the long grass.

“Advance, one rat, and give the countersign!” shouted the guard, choking with laughter; but the rodents had fled, and shifting his gun to the other shoulder, the easy sentinel continued his beat, while two giggling boys made a dash past three more guards, and a scramble into their own com-

pany street, where they were at length free from even a mock danger.

Yes, it was all over! Military law was ended, and the warlike troops were to return to peace, plowshares, and plain clothes before night — and what was to become of Jack?

It had been one long, thoughtless, unworried holiday for the boy. With plenty to eat, a good enough place to sleep, nickels always chinking in his pocket, and excitement and novelty filling every moment of his time, how could he be sad or troubled?

But this morning all was different. He must begin now to think of the future; so, after he had helped the much-tried cooks to get a breakfast for forty men, with half their utensils already packed and the roofs actually falling over their heads, he retired to a deserted tent, and turned his pockets wrong side out, with the query in his mind,

“Have I enough to get back to Chicago?”

He wished, now, that he had not been so free to buy candy, pop corn, ice cream and knickknacks; but what boy ever could keep money for future emergencies when present wishes — no matter how needless — stared him in the face?

Jack lacked considerable of the needful fare, but cheered himself with the resolve that he would stay a few days longer, and earn it by frequenting the hotels and boarding houses. "If 't wasn't for these tan and canvas shoes they 've got sech a fad for!" he groaned, as he shoveled the bits of coin back into his ragged pockets. "Those things are just ruining our perfesh. I think it 's dirt mean of the shoemakers, anyhow, and we ought to combine against 'em! When folks all wear light shoes what 's going to become of us bootblacks, I 'd like to know?"

Ruminating upon this knotty problem, he started out with an eye to business, but found little. All was confusion in camp, and the sudden change from military rule, with its precision, politeness, and respect for rank, to this *mêlée* of hurrying men, jostling each other, and joking or swearing, as the case might be, with officer and private on a perfect equality once more, was bewildering, to say the least.

He was glad when Pete suggested the tramp to British Landing, a place they had never yet found time to visit. About his only happy moments were those he spent trudging through the woods

to and from the lonely beach, while Bert, so near at hand, bewailed his absence.

In the early afternoon he watched the Kalamazoo company as they formed in line, and marched to the wharf, followed faithfully by Pete and the other bootblacks of that mess, and flinging after them for the last time the cry, "Kalamazoo-mazip-mazan!" turned away, feeling so utterly alone that he could have wept, had he not been a boy.

It was a gloomy day for him. Business was not brisk in his line, but he picked up a little change by helping in the work of destruction (so it seemed to him) rapidly going on at the encampment ground.

How fast those canvas homes of a jolly fortnight were disappearing! In a day or two there would be nothing left but a great, uneven plain, with the grass trampled to a slippery powder, to show where all this "pomp and circumstance of war" had been. It *was* hard work to keep from crying, and, as if to overwhelm him, there came back all the old bitterness and longing, all the happy memories and the wretched ending.

It was nearing sunset, and the company quar-



ters had almost disappeared, though the brigade tents still stood intact, and the officers' preparations for departure were rapidly progressing. Many had gone, and more would follow by the night boat. Jack left the dusty, bottle-strewn ground below, and slowly mounted towards the higher land, longing for companionship. He would gladly have blacked anybody's boots for one kind look or word, and though he could expect no notice from these "big bugs," something seemed to impell him onward. With this woeful lonesomeness in his heart, and his eyes on the ground, he scuffed along through the dust, as forlorn a child as could be imagined.

Glancing up, finally, he saw, a short distance ahead, now outlined sharply against the western sky, two figures hurrying towards the tents; two figures coming closer, which he knew at once! He stopped stock-still, too dazed to move. Just then the smaller figure turned its head, their paths being at right angles, and caught sight of Jack.

With a piercing cry, and the bound of a gazelle he was at the latter's side.

"Jack! *My* Jack!" he cried, and clasped him as if he would never let him go.

“ Bert ! ” breathed poor Jack, as he yielded himself to the warm embrace, while his knees seemed giving way beneath him.

Then Bert, still holding him, began to jump up and down.

“ Here he is at last ! Oh, uncle, it ’s Jack ! it ’s *Jack* ! ” Then another hug, and the sob, “ I thought we ’d lost you forever, and it ’most broke my heart. ”

The doctor, if more quiet, was no less hearty in his greeting. He called the wanderer “ Jack, my own boy ! ” and held him with shining eyes looking tenderly, believingly, into the lad’s misty ones. Then he said in a low voice,

“ It ’s all right, Jack ; the ring is found, and you are found, too. You must come home with us, and show us how forgiving you can be. ”

“ Home ? ” murmured Jack, as if in a dream.

“ Yes, yes, we are all here at the cottage, ” explained Bert, “ and looking for you high and low. We saw your picture at Arch Rock, and hurried here to find you. Come, supper ’s waiting ! Uncle, you can wire the detectives from the hotel, can’t you ? ”

“ Detectives ! ” cried Jack sharply, drawing back, for the word startled him.

“Only to find you, don't you see? We had to, for we did n't know where on earth to look” — Bert talked fast, holding his arm tight all the time — “and it seemed as if I could n't live without you, Jack! It took all the fun out of everything. And Flossie's been awful sick, and auntie is wild to tell you how sorry she is for all, and the ring was in the oddest place — you'd never guess! — and oh! Jack, Jack!”

The little group on the piazza at home were standing about Mr. Barmore, explaining his route to the encampment-ground, when another group came in sight around the south end of the cottage; a group of three, the center one an odd little figure to be in such fine company, with his unkempt look, and the kit over his shoulder. But nobody thought of that. There was a shout of “Jack! Jack!” and Flossie, all weakness forgotten, ran with flying curls to welcome him.

Then Mr. Barmore grasped his hand and nearly wrung it off, and then — Mrs. Barmore stepped forward, her fair face tremulous with feeling, and the tears shining on her lashes.

“Jack,” she whispered, “you will forgive” —

“O Jack!” broke in impulsive Flossie, “you're

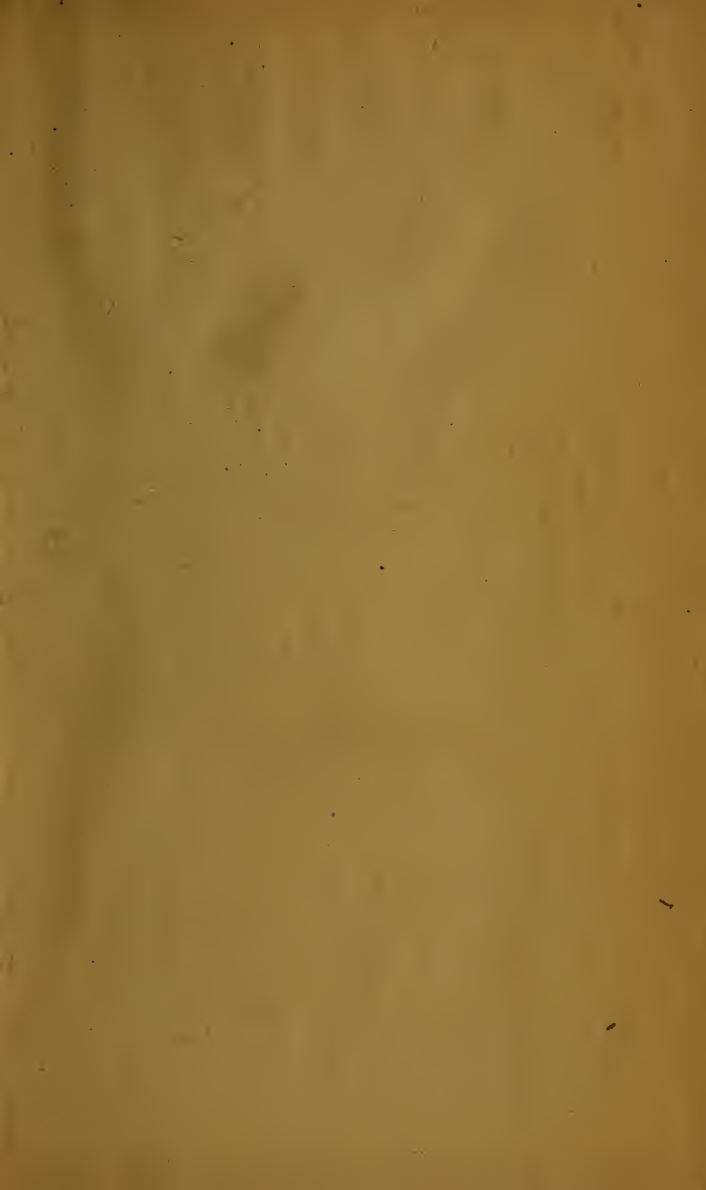
to be Bert's real brother now; uncle says so — and I 'm to be your cousin, and" —

"And I," added the lady with a sweet solemnity, "I am to be your mother!"

With the words she drew him into her arms, and kissed his lips like a mother, indeed, while Jack, overcome, and only half comprehending, nestled closer into the center of all this fondness, content to stay forever, and only wondering vaguely in the depths of a full heart,

"Oh, is it home — or heaven?"

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